XERO 7

HI THERE! I'M A FABULOUS N.Y. FANARTIST CARTOON CHARACTOR...
Rhob
"NOTICE HOW THE STYLES & SIGNATURES KEEP ON CHANGING?
STEVE STILES
THAT'S THE SIGN OF A N.Y. FANARTIST--- WILD MAN!! --ONLY ONE TROUBLE ...OH,OH!
YAAA-RGH!
WE REGRET TO ANNOUNCE THE SIMULTANEOUS GAFIATION OF THE LUPOFF ART STABLE --THE ARTIST WHO WAS DRAWING FOR THEM (DAVE ENGLISH) HAS UNDERGONE A SCHIZOPHRENIC BREAKDOWN...
END

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??????.....cover

(The Xero Prize ((a dog-eared copy of Flying Saucers magazine)) will be awarded to the one submitting the most absurd guess at the identity of our cover cartoonist.)

Xero is published with decreasing frequency by Pat and Dick Lupoff, 215 E. 73rd Street, New York 21, New York. Bhob Stewart is Art Director, and our hosts this evening are Larry and Noreen Shaw. Copies of Xero are available for contributions (including published letters), limited trades, or 35¢ per copy, 3 for $1.

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Absolute Xero

Another Goddam Poll

Ever since fandom stopped restricting its own interests to science and science fiction and began to turn its attention to other aspects of the great world about us, fans have exhibited considerable interest in politics...and I don't mean apa elections. There was Michelism, there was the technocratic movement, and there is even Joe Hensley.

In most fan gatherings where politics is a topic and in most fanzines of the same ilk there seems a general tone of near unanimity: most fans are fairly orthodox Left Liberals. That is, they favor a fairly "soft" foreign policy: anti-communist but in favor of negotiations, concessions, peaceful coexistence, recognition of the People's Republic of China, disarmament (mutual and inspected if possible, unilateral if necessary). They also favor world government, probably based on a growing and strengthened UN.

Internally, the orthodox Left Liberal favors increased government activity and control of the economic life of the nation, stopping short of outright socialism but acceping many of its proposals. The Left Liberal generally favors federal power, aid to (with or without control of) education, health insurance or an outright national health program more or less comparable to the British NHS and including federally operated hospitals and government-employed physicians, expanded welfare programs including unemployment insurance and relief, a permanent and extensive government farm program, increased government influence in industry including increased government control of commercial and mass-communications practices, such as advertising and television programming, and a permanently high level of government spending and public employment.

On the other hand the politically/economically conservative element in fandom usually seems extremely quiet, and one is led to think it is very small. Bob Leman seems to wage a lonely battle from his Rocky Mountain retreat. A few others -- very few -- make sounds from time to time, feebly protesting the orthodox Left Liberal tone of fans' politics, but they seem lost and forlorn.

Well I wonder.

I just wonder whether there is really the near unanimity that there seems to be, in fandom's political leanings, I wonder if there is not more sentiment for a harder foreign policy and a more conservative internal policy. If there is, it will be of interest to find out about it, and then to enquire why the Right is so reticent while the Left is so outspoken. If there is not, this in itself is significant and it will be worthwhile to translate the "general tone" of fandom into a statistical statment.

Enclosed with each copy of this issue of XERO is a copy (in case of married couples, two copies) of the questionnaire reproduced on the facing page. This means that somewhat in excess of 150 science fiction fans and fringe fans are being querried. It is not necesaarily to everyone's satisfaction that the readership of XERO is a true sample of all fandom, although I personally believe this to be the case except for a small number of comic-booky people who probably won't even respond to this poll. You are invited to fill in any or all items, and to add whatever additional comment you think appropriate. Your name may be placed on your questionnaire if you wish, but this is not required. The results will be tabulated and reported in XERO 8.

(British, Canadians, and other furriners: Your replies cannot be counted in this poll for obvious reasons, but as a matter of interest, an appendix will by published if a significant number of you respond with data corresponding to the political situation in your own countries.)

2

RL

ANOTHER GODDAM POLL

Section I: Registration and Voting

1. Are you a registered voter?.....__Yes__No
2. If yes, indicate your registration; if no, your general sentiment:
__Democrat __Republican __other (please indicate _____)
3. Did you vote in the 1960 presidential election?.....__Yes__No
4. If yes, indicate your vote; if no, your preference AT THE TIME OF THE ELECTION:
__Kennedy __Nixon __other (please indicate_____)
5. Did you vote in the 1956 presidential election?.....__Yes__No
6. If yes, indicate your vote; if no, your preference AT THE TIME OF THE ELECTION:
__Eisenhower __Stevenson __other (please indicate_____)

Section II: Opinion on selected issues (foreign policy)

7. In the conduct of US foreign relations, you favor a policy generally
__more militant __more accomodating __about as at present.
8.a Do you believe that US foreign policy should have a specific "goal"?.....__Yes__No
b If yes, would you favor: __Victory over communism
__Peace and friendship with all peoples and systems
__Other (Please specify_____
_____)
9.a Do you favor disarmament based on mutual inspection and controls?.....__Yes__No
b If this cannot be attained, do you favor disarmament based on mutual pledges and the "honor system"?.....__Yes__No
c If this cannot be attained, do you favor unilateral disarmament?.....__Yes__No
10.a Should the United States recognize the People's Republic of China?.....__Yes__No
b Should the United States work for the admission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations?.....__Yes__No
c If the People's Republic of China should gain membership in the United Nations, should the United States withdraw from the UN?.....__Yes__No

11. Here are a couple of admitted catch-phrases. Which do you prefer?
__Give me liberty or give me death.
__Better red than dead.

Section III: Opinion on selected issues (domestic policy)

12. Do you favor generally increased governmental control and activity in domestic economic affairs?.....__Yes__No

13. The general power of labor unions should be __increased __decreased __as at present.

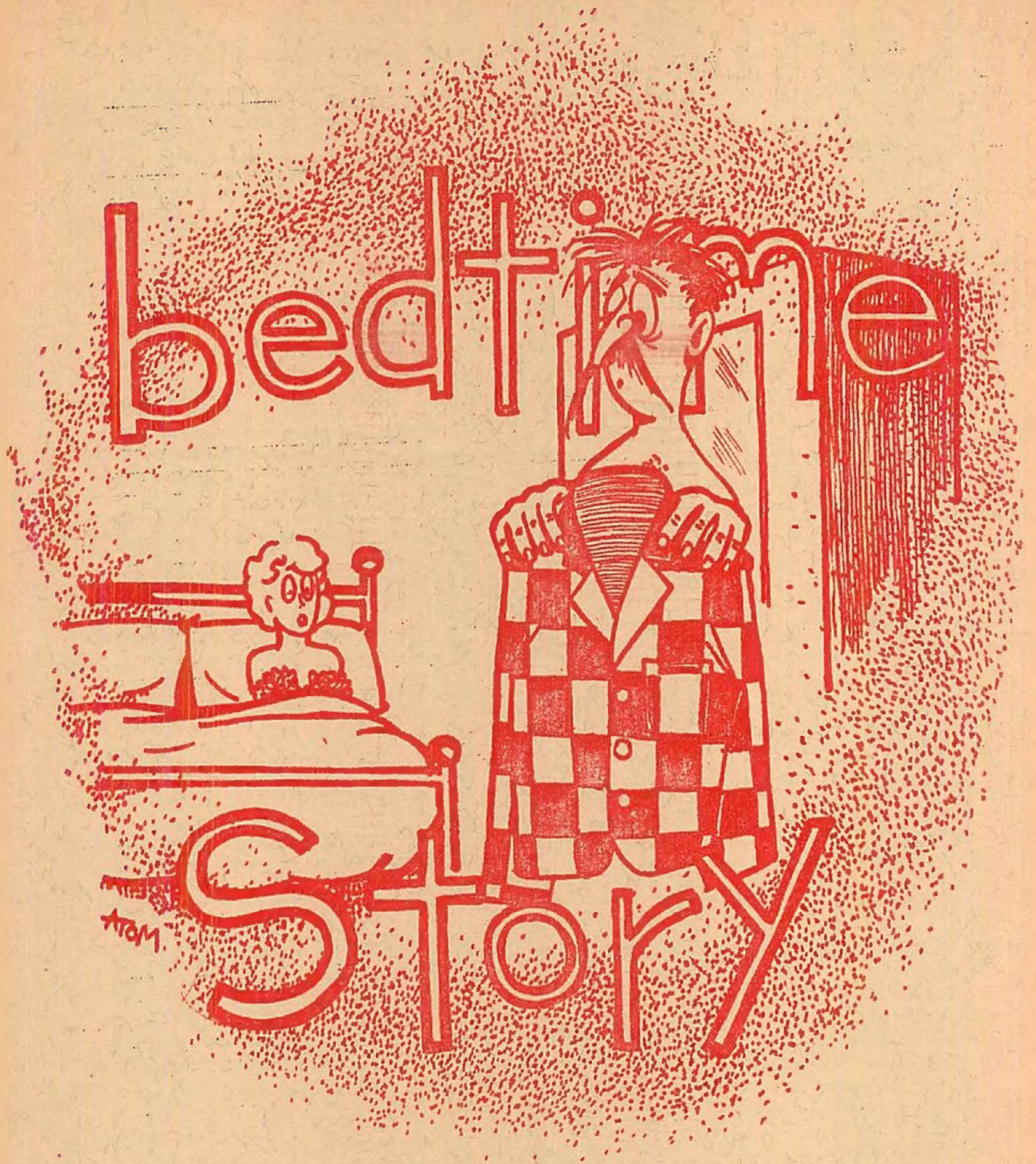
14. Should the government "get out" of (a) the farm business.....__Yes__No
(b) the power business.....__Yes__No

15. Should the government "get into"
(a) school aid (public schools)..__Yes__No (b) school aid (parochial).....__Yes__No
(c) health insurance.....__Yes__No (d) health "service".....__Yes__No
(e) transportation.....__Yes__No (f) general industrial pricing and wage policies.....__Yes__No
(g) advertising and merchandising practices.....__Yes__No

Section IV:

If you wish, state your position on any of the questions above or any other relevant matters, including the whole idea of this survey.

Larry Shaw Special: Now that the Kennedy administration is almost a year old, are you generally __disappointed, __pleased, __neither...with its conduct?


bedtime
Story

The fanzine publishing this, besides having a most commendable appreciation of the more intellectual type of literary contribution, is being in the fortunate position of featuring a world scientific scoop.

To us of this esoteric microcosm the mundane must of necessity create a want. Facts are all right in their place, but what I have always felt we have shown is a particular affinity for the facts behind the facts. The mundane world accepts data on its face value, but we of fandom do not. The New York Herald-Tribune could, for example, publish the bald statement that Robert Heinlein was seen coming out of a Pittsburg hotel with his shirt soaking wet. So okay. The readership is contented...there is perhaps an element of doubt as to how this shirt became soaking wet, but the fact that it was wet is what is significant. We know that in point of fact he was just previously keenly engrossed in a zap battle with Les Gerber and Check Devine, but to the lay press this would seem invidious. (That word is published by the kind permission of Walt Willis.)

And to my telling point. In the January 1962 issue of the NEW SCIENTIST there will be a several-page feature by 'Our Correspondent'...it will deal with a revolutionary new collection of scientific facts which will astound even such acknowledged intellectuals as Professor Kimble of Peanut Universe fame, to say nothing of Lord Bertrand Russell, who once appeared in a publication which also featured James White.

As I said, the facts will be laid bare, but the facts behind the facts...ah...that is a different kettle of tiddlers altogether....

Of necessity, then, this version of the secret experiments will appear garbled. I can only speak of my own innocent participation, and this I will do in unscientific jargon, principally because I don't know any scientific jargon!

A warning. Because of the adult theme, I strongly suggest that only married or 'Men and Women of the World' types read this.....

I have been married for twelve years.

This, besides being a statement of fact which I can prove beyond doubt (the day the Curate of St. Peter's entered the Mental Hospital is enscribed on the Church Records) is pertinent to the narrative, as far as I can take it. I mean, we all have our moments, but after twelve years you can take it from me that upon entering my bed chamber (which I of course share with my beloved) at night, my thoughts are divided between a desire to sleep and the urge to finish chapter three of THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS.

I know my prestige will suffer in America because of this admission, but as I said, twelve years.....

Now on Sunday 11th of June 1961, at 2 am, a funny thing happened in my bedroom.

I presume my wife was asleep.

I was not.

I was reflecting on some minor points of a thesis due to be published soon on the effects of the Ming Dynasty on the current political situation in Astrakhan...I was lying on my back, with my hands clasped behind my head, and I was concentrating, when the bed collapsed.

Just like that.

My wife, muttering something unintelligible, but which definitely included the words "don't tell my mother" switched on the light, and we surveyed the debris....

To put it briefly, the cast iron fitting on the bottom of the bed (on my wife's side) onto which the bed rail is screwed had broken at the joint. It was impossible to fix, and we had to sort out the remains of the bed, and fix a make-shift resting place for the rest of the night.

Beyond sending a letter of complaint to the ACME BED SPRING CO (I've never had any trouble with their wardrobes) all I did about the inciddnt was to make the ridiculous error of mentioning the fact to the members of Irish Fandom. They thought it was quite humorous, actually, and Sadie Shaw and Madelein Willis looked at me with pride in their eyes all night long. They didn't seem to believe the bit about my Ming Dynasty meditations, they sort of intimated that cast iron is, weeell, cast iton...

- - - - - - - - - - - -

Towards the end of July 1961, a letter came from the aforementioned ACME BED SPRING CO...a letter enclosed in a parcel which held the smartest pair of men's pyjamas you ever did see...a new style, the letter explained...black and white squares, about three inches square each...most becoming, even fetching, my wife explained. Also enclosed in the parcel was a new set of four cast iron mouldings. The covering letter was versed most politely, explaining that the Company took great pride in its manufactured articles, and even though the bed had functioned for over a decade, such was their standding that they felt impelled to replace the mouldings, and as a sort of gesture they had taken the liberty of including the pyjamas, which they hoped I would deem worthy of wearing when I went to bed, safe in the knowledge that their iron castings were supporting me.

- - - - - - - - - - - -

From then on, things began to take a decidedly sinister move, although in my sublime innocence I made the wrong interpretation.

We all know that Ian McAulay comes under the category of a 'Man of the World.' It is not for me to write in detail about the chorus girls he has taken home in his car (although I must confess that if you are interested in McAuley's sex life, I strongly recommend to you a reading of a terrifically humorous fan fiction story entitled HAM ROLE, which will appear soon, or may have appeared when this sees the light of duper ink) but even James White, a man of his reputation, has attested to the enviable fact that when Ian McAulay gets a young girl in his car, he assumes a (QUOTE) "indecent haste" (UNQUOTE).

It is also well known that Ian McAulay is a man of considerable education and intelligence, and it surprised me, therefore, that after a week's trip to London (he often makes them, and it didn't then seem significant) which he made in August, our intellectual discussions were often interrupted by such telling questions as "On what side of the bed do you sleep?" and "Do your bed springs give any high decibel frequency?"

One incidant, which even now I do not profess to understand, happened in early September.

We were playing Scrabble in my house (that's a sort of word game, played like a combination mechanical crossword puzzles and ludo) and at ten o'clock at night, Ian asked for a glass of milk. This itself was significant, as he usually drinks lager, but Diane gave him a glass of milk. He went upstairs on a mundane pretext, and then went home.

In bed that night, I looked under the bed for my volume of THE HIGHER ETHICS OF UNCONSCIOUS THOUGHT, and saw a strange contraption...the glass of milk was under the bed, and suspended above it, was a length of cord from which hung a wooden stick about six inches long...the bottom of the stick just skimming the top of the milk. Well, McAulay is a scientist, and I presumed this to be one of his madly scientific experiments.

I didn't have time to look for the result in the morning, because I was late for the office, but that night Diane told me that Ian had called and had been most bewildered when she'd given him the glass of butter.....?????

- - - - - - - - - - - -

On the evening of the Irish Fandom party at my house, McAulay's behaviour was remarkable in its bewildering complexities.

When he thought no one was looking, he put the clocks forward <u>three hours</u>.

We chatted and discoursed, until 3 am (although it was obviously only 12 midnight) and Ian suggested that if I didn't mind maybe they could all stop the night, because the sound of all their cars starting up would waken and annoy the neighbours...

I was the host, and although the sleeping accomodation was limited, I acceded to the request, and Ian McAulay, who was scheduled to sleep on the settee downstairs, seemed to be throbbing with excitement when he said goodnight to us.....

- - - - - - - - - - - -

Now I've given you the background facts.

They are for you to interpret as you deem necessary.

But in order to assist you in what will be a gigantic mental exercise, I can but reprint (without permission) some lengthy data from the transcript of 'OUR CORRESPONDENT' who is of course Ian McAulay. The ms isn't due for publication until next January, and I must plead that you readers will not get either McAulay, myself, or the faneditors concerned into legal trouble by revealing publicly that you have been privileged to see how a Great Mind works when given an apparently unsolvable problem.....

You are in a unique position.

I may be able to swing a similar deal again....

So keep it to yourself, huh?

- - - - - - - - - -

(REPRINT):

'.....and in view of the fact that little is known of the behaviour of metal bod castings when under stress it was decided to initiate some preliminary research on this topic.

A firm of manufacturers of bed castings approached the writer with a sample of a casting which had collapsed under what was claimed to be normal usage.

Spectroscopic examination of the fractured article indicated that failure had occurred as a result of large amplitude vibrations at moderately high frequencies.

The manufacturers were able to supply the name and address of the user of the fractured casting, who resided at Campbell Park Ave., Belfast, which was conveniently placed for the taking of experimental observations.

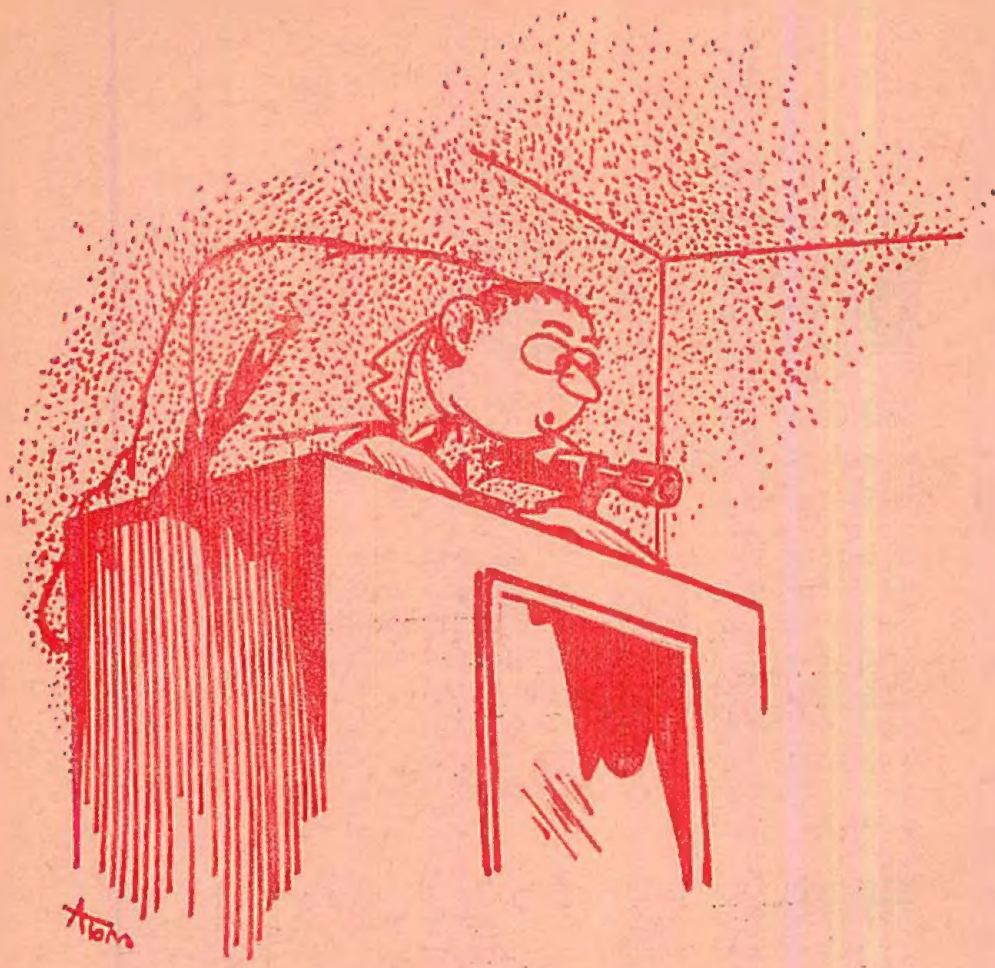
Accordingly it was necessary to devise a scheme whereby readings could be obtained of the frequency to which the casting was subjected under conditions of normal use in this household.

The writer was able to obtain access to the bedroom of the user for long enough to conceal an infra-red stroboscope and automatically operated camera in the wardrobe.

After the couple under observation had retired for the night it was necessary to enter the sleeping quarters in a stealthy fashion in order to make necessary adjustments to the experimental arrangement, which was successfully done.

In a position of observation on top of a much worn wardrobe, the initiation of the high frequency vibrations was apparent audibly.

At this juncture the stroboscope flash frequency was adjusted until the agent producing the vibrations appeared stationary in the infra-red viewer. (This was made easier by the fact that the dominant subject was attired in black and white squared pyjamas). This frequency was noted as 1,900 cycles per second, plus or minus one percent.



The equipment in use did not have sufficiently large range to record the amplitudes reached, but the period for which the frequency was applied was slightly in excess of 44.5 minutes.

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Laboratory tests were carried out on a similar casting obtained from the same manufacturer. This indicated that complete metal fatigue of the casting in question could be expected after 6,740 hours, plus or minus 20 hours.

The normal life time of a casting of this sort might be expected to be in excess of 25 years and it might be considered that the one recorded failure occurred as a result of gross overloading at a critical frequency.

As a result of this investigation it may be categorically stated that there is no cause for alarm among normal users of metal castings of this type, but further research into the amplitude vibrations occurring in a small number of cases similar to that described in this paper should be initiated.

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In conclusion, the writer would like to thank the ACME BED SPRING COMPANY for sponsoring this research and providing financial assistannce, etc.....'

(END OF REPRINT)

That's the end of the amazing story, folks.
One other minor matter springs to mind, though.
Remember I said that Ian McAulay suggested that they should all stop the night... as host, I naturally gave our bedroom to the Willises...Walt told me next morning he thought those black and white squared pyjamas were very contemporary.....

John Berry 1961

(The author would like to thank Dr. Ian McAulay, B.A., Ph.D., for technical assistance...)

BOOKS IN CARTER

HEINLEIN AT THE TOP OF HIS FORM

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, Robert A. Heinlein, Putnam, N.Y., '61. 408 pp; $4.50.

Heinlein is the only science fiction writer of his generation, i.e., Astounding, early '40s, still active in the field and still improving. His Double Star (Doubleday '56) amazed us, and his Citizen of the Galaxy (Scribners, '57) may be the best sf novel he has ever done. Now he has surprised us again, turning out the nearest thing to a major novel that any writer in our field has done.

Strangor is something new for Heinlein. Most of his work has been "story" up to now, and although he was always strong on "character", he has never before now done an "idea" novel. As such, this book will remind you of Phil Wylie...particularly, I think, of Opus 21.

Like that book, Heinlein has given us a stinging, merciless critique/lampoon of contemporary society, manners, and above all, morals, thinly disguised as a science fiction novel. Valentine Michael Smith, only child (and only survivor) of the marooned and now dead members of the First Mars Expedition, is brought to Earth by the Second Expedition. Raised among the Martian natives, he is exposed for the first time to earthly customs and ideas as a young man in his twenties. Through his eyes we are given a clear and unprejudiced look at some of the more striking insanities of terrestrial life, such as near-future politics, evangelical new religions, sexual customs, technology, clothing, education and so on.

The story is complicated by an extra factor: Smith is fantastically rich and of inconceivable political importance, for due to near-future international law he is "owner" of the entire planet Mars, and as an added attraction, he just happens to be the only heir to the inventor of the currently used space drive patents.

As in many another Heinlein story, our hero is for a large portion of the book under fire from grasping, plutocratic, millionaire business babbitts, and one of the most tense and exciting scenes of the book is Heinlein's nth scene of grass-roots-Yankee-individualism locked in combat with faceless governmental bureaucratic tyranny (one of Heinlein's pet themes, and handled here beautifully).

We have here a sinewy, stimulating novel by a man writing at the very height of his powers. The plot is absorbing and strong, if a little loose and wide-focussed. The cast of characters is a very large one for Heinlein, and contains one of his finest characters in the eccentric, shrewd, crusading lawyer, Jubal Harshaw, another of Heinlein's series of archtypal Yankees, superbly sane, hard-headed, clear-thinking, no-nonsense, and salt of the earth (remember Gramps Schneider in Waldo? And Colonel Baslim in Citizen?). Jubal may owe something to Clarence Darrow, but who doesn't?

Tucked in the corners and crevices of this long and richly rewarding novel are (1) a brilliant, concise sketch of native Martian society, complete with an outline of the philosophy and beautifully original "religion", (2) another devastating Heinleinian character-sketch of a future evangelistic religious cult which has absorbed the worst aspects of modern high-pressure salesmanship, advanced advertising psychology, and pornographic appeal, and (3) one of the most brilliant and extremely difficult technical achievements, a characterization of a new Superman, sane, morally clean, absolutely perfect -- and yet, interesting as a person. Heinlein's achievement of making Smith a rounded and colorful individual, not a cardboard prig, is enviable.

Putnam's is marketing this as if it were not a science fiction novel, but a mainstream novel of ideas. This may be the book that makes Heinlein, as far as contemporary literature goes. It is beyond all question one of his very best.

(Editors' note: By coincidence the night before this stencil was cut we went with Jock Root to a revival showing of THE THING. Sitting there and admiring the very good performances and the even better Charles Lederer script, we were jolted by a snatch of dialog...

It's nearly the climax of the movie. The alien is advancing down the booby-trapped corridor. As the electricity is about to be applied, the pacifistic chief scientist, hoping still to establish contact with the alien, pleads with with his fellow humans in behalf of the alien.

After all, he cries, the alien is "....a stranger in a strange land!"

Today we dug out Campbell's Who Goes There? and sought in vain for the line. Thus it would seem that Heinlein got it from the Lederer screenplay, unless...

Are there any Campbell scholars in the audience?

--PL/RL)

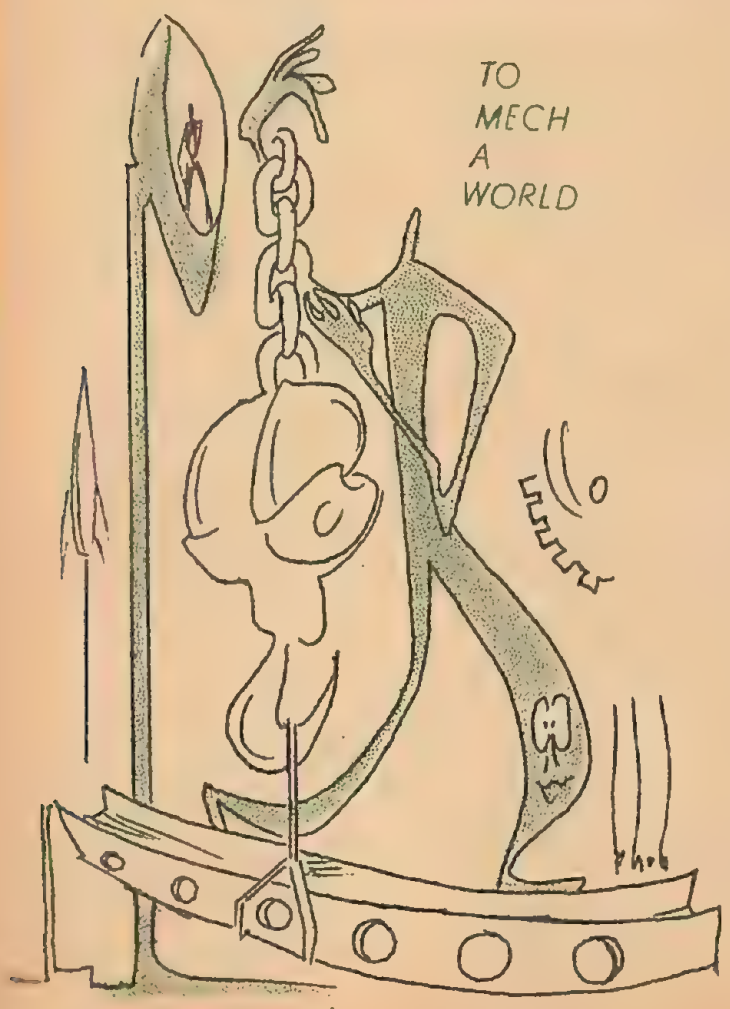
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSON

THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS, Poul Anderson, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., '61. 191 pp; $2.95.

We have come to expect the unexpected from Poul Anderson. There's no longer any telling what his next book will be...a good, tight Analog type SF novel, or a juicy Conanesque historical, like The Golden Slave (with that fiendishly clever twist on the end!)...a bright, original detective novel, or a freewheeling lampoon-pastiche like Earthman's Burden.

Well, his new one is closest to The Broken Sword (Abelard-Schuman, '54). Sword was and is one of the small masterpieces of original pure fantasy produced in our time, comparable to Pratt's Well of the Unicorn.

The new book marks a return to the pure fantasy-romance, and is even better than Sword. I remember when Three Hearts was being serialized in F&SF in 1953, thinking this was the best thing of its kind since Pratt met DeCamp. It still is...in fact it's better than the Harold Shea stories; it comes fairly near to Tolkien, Himself. In book form it's about twice as long as the magazine version: either Anderson added to it, or Boucher cut it in the first place. But it does not matter, it's just more of a good thing.



Holger Carlsen is a Dane living in America during World War II, who returns to Denmark when the Nazis move in. During a skirmish, he is knocked out and wakes up in a world of Carolingian romance. At first, and for the bulk of the novel, this transition seems the result of pure accident (as in Lest Darkness Fall), but it turns out to be not as necessary as the same transition was in the Pratt - DeCamp Land of Unreason, but very much the same idea. But enough of that.

The world into which he is so abruptly plunged, is a Cabellian, Tolkienian fantasy world of the Middle Ages...the good old days (with a vengeance) when dragons and giants and witches were still around...when Magick still "worked" and Faerie still had commerce with the Lands We Know....

As it soon comes out, the particular point of time at which Holger enters this world is a crucial era, indeed. The forces of Chaos and the forces of the Law are in urgent conflict, and at times the lawless world of

Faerie and witchcraft seems on the brink of overwhelming civilization. Holger seems to be the key to the conflict, like Van Vogt's Ptath, he has not realized who he is and the extent of his powers.

Although Anderson's plot adds a solid narrative dimension to his novel, it is all really immaterial: the main feature of the book is the world into which Holger has been transported. In a style inferior to Tolkien only because of length and wealth of detail, he gives us a complete and rounded and tantalizingly brief look at the world of the Emperor Charlemagne, as it is described in the Middle French chansons. His story is filled with wonderful people, Alianora the swan-may, Hugi the Dwarf, Alfric the Elf-Earl, Morgana le Fay, the sorceress. We wander through the Empire, that is, Law, and into Faerie itself. We experience again the rich wonder and mystery of the world of fairy tales we experienced in childhood, but cannot recapture (except in the rare adult romance like this book) in re-reading those tales as an adult.

It's the best novel of unadulterated fantasy that has been published in at least five years. If only it were three times as long!

NEW FICTION BRIEFLY NOTED

THIEF OF BAGHDAD, Richard Wormser, Dell, N.Y., '61. 191 pp; 35¢.

The novelized screenplay of the (recent) third incarnation of the wonderful old Fairbanks movie. This Steve Reeves movie wasn't so bad, although it didn't measure up either to the Fairbanks original or the Korda masterpiece of the '40s. Nor does this little novel measure up to the Achmed Abdullah THIEF (Which must have been one of the first novelized screenplays ever done) of 1924. Still it's not bad.

LILITH, J.R. Salamanca, Simon & Schuster, N.Y., '61. 381 pp; $5.50.

Remember the first story in THE FIFTY MINUTE HOUR, the one where the psychiatrist gets sucked into his patient's fantasy world? This is not unlike the Lindner plot, but vastly superior. A drifting and rootless young man, employed as attendent in a Southern asylum, becomes first intrigued, then enchanted, by a beautiful, ravishing young girl named Lilith, an inmate suffering from a remarkably complete set of delusions. Briefly, she thinks she is in contact with an invisible world around ours ...a world of grave Elders, immaculate and pastoral culture, magical and haunting beauty. She has invented a language, a literature, a sort of religion, and a number of musical compositions for her dream world.

The young man, Vincent, falls in love and gradually she brings him under her control. The mask of loveliness falls away as she forces him to assist her in sexual perversions with other inmates...and he trembles on the very edge of believing her delusions are real, that the world of Lilith is the reality, and the world around him is the delusion. The climax (when it comes) is savagely powerful.

Salamanca is a mainstream novelist whose first book (THE LOST COUNTRY, Simon & Schuster, '58) elicited considerable excitement from the mainstream reviewers. He is a brilliant stylist who has achieved mastery of his form in only two books. His prose is limpid, jewelled, lyric. His characterization is subtle and solid. A very highly recommended borderline book, well worth reading, erotic, poetic.

GOTHIC GASSER

MELMOTH THE WANDERER, Charles Robert Maturin, Introduction by William F. Axton, Bison Books, Lincoln, Nebraska, '61. xxii plus 412 pp; $2.40.

Like science fiction, the Gothic romance emerged suddenly and distinctly from the mainstream of prose fiction at a precise date, produced a body of literature marked by certain distinguishing characteristics and literary devices, and after a time (perhaps like science fiction in the near future) dissolved in the mainstrem again, leaving a heritage of narrative machinary which formed the basis for several subsidiary schools of fiction...in the case of Gothicism, the detective story and the historical romance.

Melmoth is one of the last true Gothic novels. Written in 1820, it has had an unfortunate history. Although it is the last of the great Gothic novels (and possibly the finest product of the whole field) it has met with little attention from publishers, and has but rarely been reprinted in the past one hundred forty years. While compiling notes for Finnegan's Wake, James Joyce spent several years trying to procure a copy. It has for a long time been one of the most fabulously rare items in the field of fantasy collecting, and its reprint here in softcover for a mass market as such a low price, makes it undoubtedly the biggest bargain of the year. Despite its extreme rarity, it has consistently attracted the attention of other writers, who have recognized its artistry and extraordinary power. Not Joyce alone, but such widely diverging types as Oscar Wilde (who adopted the nom-de-plume of "Sebastian Melmoth" during his last years of exile in France), and Balzac (who compared it to Goethe's Faust and Byron's Manfred).

Baudelaire recognized it as a "great satanic creation", and Poe commented on it pithily. In our day, Lovecraft (in Supernatural Horror in Literature, 1927) called it a masterpiece, and its author "a man of authentic genius". A rare copy of Melmoth was among Lovecrafts personal collection of books at the time of his death.

Now, thanks to the University of Nebraska, whose paperbacks are issued under the Bison Books imprint, we all have a chance to see for ourselves how good this legendary masterpiece of terror really is. And happily it manages to live up to the glowing praises of the handful of critics who have discussed it during the last century or so. A very long, very complicated novel, which employs the "chinese box-within-box-within-box" narrative technique (like the Panchatantra) it makes heavy, hard reading...but very rewarding reading, indeed.

For this masterly novel is the ultimate summation of the Gothic romance. It uses every trick, every device, every classic locale employed by its predecessors. The graveyard at night...the dungeons of the Inquisition...the old, mysterious abbey... the fearful storm and shipwreck at sea...the death-scene by candle-light...the mysterious manuscript...the face glimpsed in a crowd, identical with an ancient family portrait...the long-hidden ancestral secret...they are all here, with enigma upon enigma, mystery upon mystery, painted in small, precise strokes in hues of midnight, torch-light, and arterial crimson. And through the dark pages, through the layers of fragmentary personal narratives, stalks the strange, lean, black-clad figure with the saturnine, tormented, cold white face, of the undying Wanderer who serves as the connecting link that binds these diverse stories together, and gathers them with cumulative force for the final, shattering revelation.

It is good. It is still readable.

It makes Frankenstein look like Toby Tyler.

THE DRAWINGS OF HEINRICH KLEY, Dover Publications, N.Y., '61. viii plus 128 pp; $1.85.

The entire works of this fine German artist have been long out of print. A master of the macabre, grotesque and fantastic in the pen and ink, he has a wonderful nervous line and a fertile and Rabelaisian imagination. This book is a wonderful bargain (200 illustrations, excellently reproduced), and will be a fine addition to any collection that includes Dore, Beardsley and Rackham.

ORLANDO, Virginia Woolf, Signet Classics, N.Y., '60. Illustrated, 215 pp; with an Afterword by Elizabeth Bowen; 50¢.

This low-priced reprint of a little-known fantasy classic should be prominently placed on your "must buy" list. The novel is a swash-buckling juicy fiction not unlike Baron Munchhausen or the shorter romances of Voltaire, and written in a crisp, ringing prose that has to be read to be appreciated. A sample (the first sentence): "He -- for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it -- was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters."

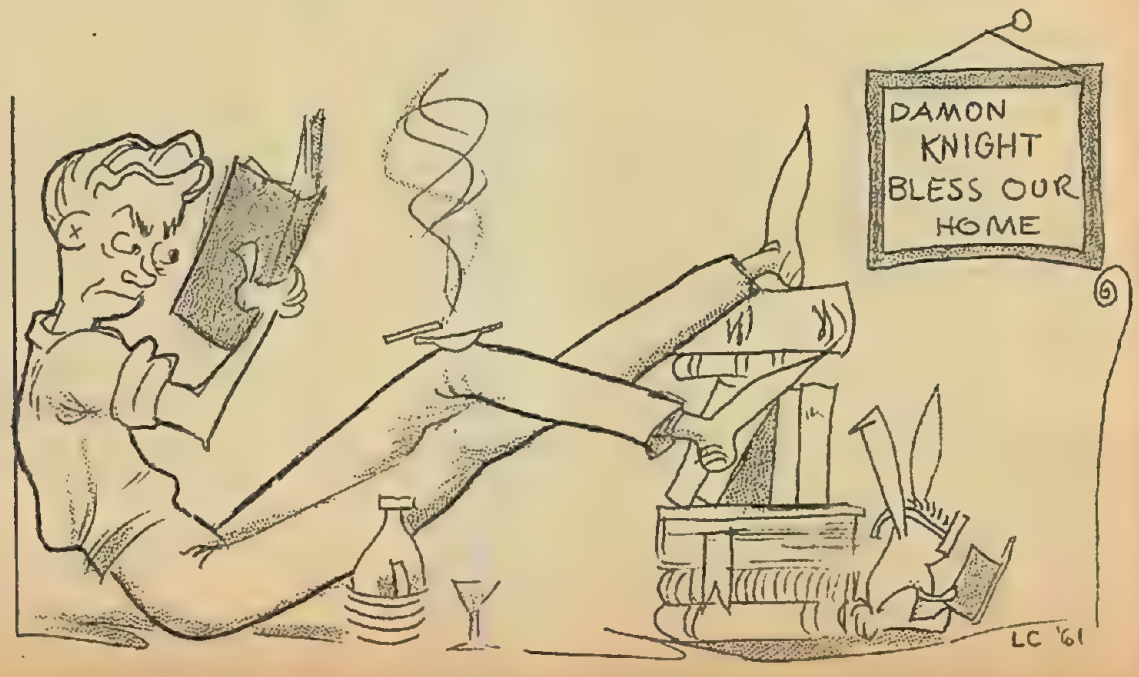
This gorgeous book involves an unexplained immortality, a change of sex (in which a man who fled the country to escape the attentions of a persistent and amorous dowager, returns as a woman to find the said dowager now a man and still amorous), a wild tour of a Europe which never existed but should have, and assorted rapes, piracies, intrigues and adventures. Get it.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE SPACESHIP, Arthur C. Clarke, Ballantine, N.Y., '61. 185 pp; 50¢.

A stimulating and moderately imaginative collection of twenty articles on spaceflight and the future, reprinted from a number of magazines (both mainstream and microcosm); highly authoritative but occasionally too "basic" for us cognoscenti. Not the book it could have been at all.

WALL OF SERPENTS, L. Sprague DeCamp & Fletcher Pratt, Avalon, N.Y., '60. 223 pp; $2.95.

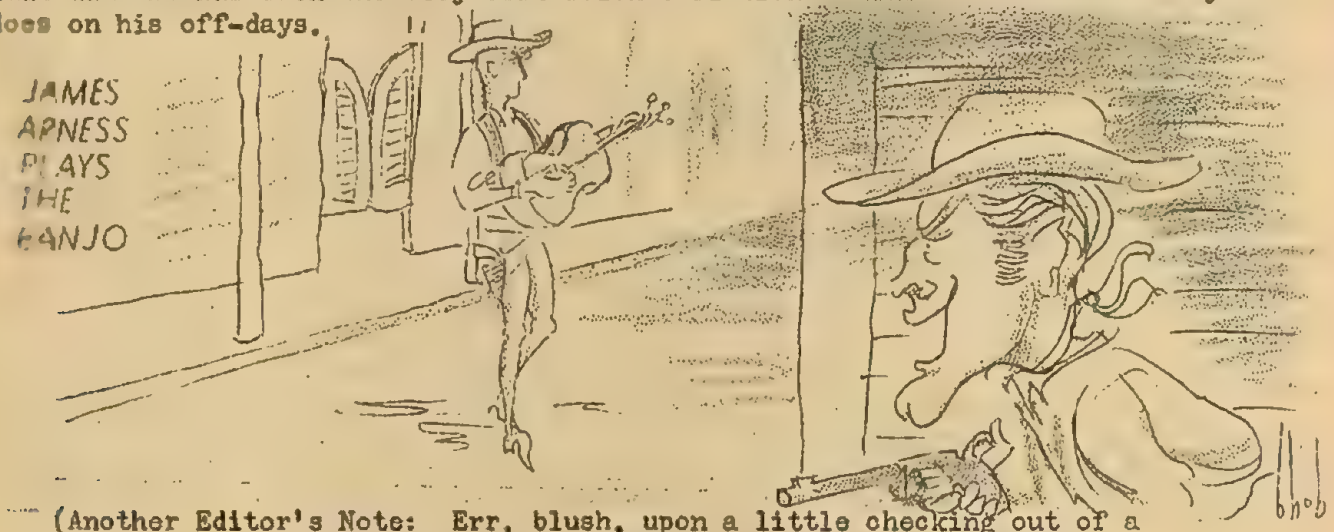
At last we have the two final Harold Shea stories in hardcover (...although there may be another to come: Pratt and DeCamp seem to have left Walter Bayard behind in Cuchulainn's Ireland), and one of the best series in modern fantasy has ended. It may be kind of hard to understand, if you haven't read The Incomplete Enchanter or Castle of Iron, but anyway, Harold Shea and his wife, Belphebe (from the world of Spenser's Faerie Queene),



in order to get Pete the Cop and Bayard out of Coleridge's Xanadu, use the mathematical magic of symbolic logic to enter the world of The Kalavala. There, a mighty magician is coerced into helping them, and the two lost sheep are plucked from Coleridge. Escaping from The Kalavala, they end up in the Ireland of the Mythological Cycle, but finally get home in one piece. Great stuff all around!

6 x H, Robert a Heinlein, Pyramid, N.Y., '61. 191 pp; 35¢.

We opened this column with Heinlein, and we close it with him. This is a reprint of The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag. With remarkable wisdom, Heinlein has kept together in this one book all of his poorest stories, rather than allowing them to contaminate and dilute his better books. The only one missing that should be here is "Jerry is a Man", and the only one here that belongs with the best of Heinlein elsewhere, is "All You Zombies". Since even mediocre Heinlein is more entertaining and provoking than many writers' best, you will probably enjoy reading this collection at least once. It is kind of fascinating to see how that man who has been the very best science fiction writer for the last ten years does on his off-days.



(Another Editor's Note: Err, blush, upon a little checking out of a quotations book, it seems that "stranger in a strange land" is originally from the Book of Exodus.

This still does not tell us, of course, where Heinlein got it. The religious aspects of his novel would point to the Biblical source, but in the light of the relationship between Heinlein and Campbell, and the appearance of THE THING, the long arm of coincidence seems to be stretching m-i-g-h-t-y long.

So I repeat: Any Campbell-Heinlein-Bible scholars in the house?

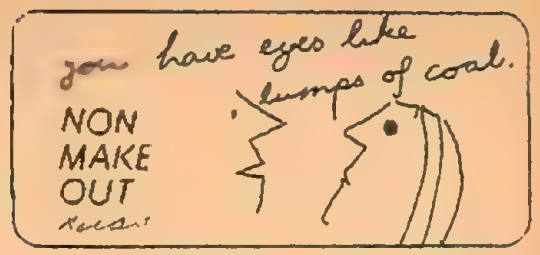
Another point, as long as THE THING has arisen to haunt these pages: according to Sergeant Harold Lynch, that sparkling screenplay was not the work of Lederer alone, but was largely the product of Ben Hecht. At the time of the film's release (1950) it was feared that Hecht's zionist work would hurt revenues in Great Britain, and so he agreed to accept his paycheck and keep quiet.

RL)

"I HAVE WALKED THE NAKED STREETS LOOKING FOR A NAKED GIRL!!"

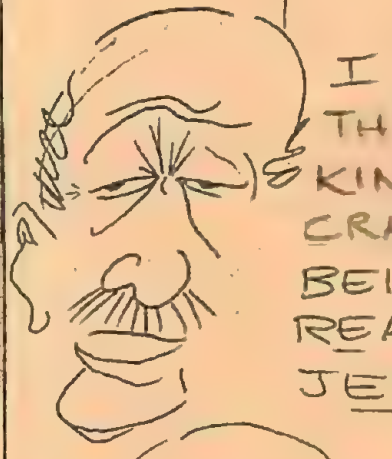
"OH CHRIST WHO IS MY AGONY, HOW HIP MUST I BE BEFORE I DESCEND INTO NIRVANA?"

"OH—THE DEADLY DULLNESS OF DORMANT DUNG!!"



TWENTY YEARS I WORK BEHIND THIS SODA FOUNTAIN...

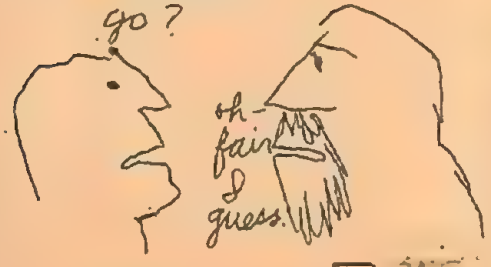
I SUFFER THROUGH ALL KINDA CORNY CRAP ABOUT BEING A REAL SODA JERK



IT'S WORTH IT FOR.. THE FREE ICE CREAM THOUGH.

AN ATTENDANT LORD AT 72ND & LEX

How'd the rehearsal go?



PRETTY FAR OFF BROADWAY

a native new yorker and an immigrant from texas fail at putting Manhattan and Manhattanites on paper mainly due to space limitations

part I: theme and form .by lin carter

notes on Tolkien

While Professor Tolkien's THE LORD OF THE RINGS is beyond all question, in W. H. Auden's phrase, "a masterpiece of its genre", and certainly what the Boston Herald-Traveler called "one of the best wonder-tales ever written -- and one of the best written", it is definitely not, as so many of its readers seem to think, either unique or unprecedented. In the course of a full-page review in the book review section of the New York Times for January 22, 1956, the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mr. Auden remarked, anent the third volume of the trilogy, "I believe Mr. Tolkien has succeeded more completely than any previous writer in this genre in using the traditional properties of the Quest, the heroic journey, the Numinous Object, the conflict between Good and Evil while at the same time satisfying our sense of historical and social reality" -- thus recognizing that the trilogy does, indeed, belong to a tradition, and is not to be considered as a literary "mutant" such as The Circus of Dr. Lao, for example.

But what, or rather, which, tradition? In attempting to place THE LORD OF THE RINGS in one or another classification of fantasy literature, we face something of an embarrassment of riches. It could well be called an Imaginary World fantasy (like The Dying Earth or The Well of the Unicorn), a Fantasy-Adventure (such as the 'Conan'

fictions or de Camp's Tritonian Ring), or even a sort of adult fairy-tale. However, I much prefer to consider it as being nothing more nor less than the latest, and perhaps the supreme, example of the Epic Fantasy Novel.

Regarded as an Epic Fantasy, it is the most recent work in a body of literature whose earliest origins may be traced back to the very roots of Western literature themselves, the Homeric poems. Just as the two central themes in Tolkien are the War theme and the Quest or Journey theme, so we find in Homer the Journey theme to be the basic framework of The Odyssey, and the War theme that of The Iliad. The origins of the Epic Fantasy, rooted as they are in Homeric Greece of the 8th Century B.C., and the continuity of this school of imaginative literature, form a study so extraordinary and entertaining that I am surprised they have never been traced for modern fantasy enthusiasts, intrigued with this form of writing.

1. The Outline of Epic Fantasy

With the decline of the Greek creative impulse coinciding rather curiously with the brief and ultimately lethal rise of Athenian power and influence to imperialistic levels, the epic as an art form was lost until its revival in post-Carolingian Europe, despite transitory but fruitful, brief periods when it flourished in Alexandrian Egypt, to produce the Posthomerica and the Argonautika, and in imperial Rome, resulting in the epic literature of Virgil, Lucretius, Lucan and Statius. The translation of the epic into Europe produced a wealth of fine literature, such as the Song of Roland, The Lusiads, The Cid, and something like three hundred other epics, which, however, actually represented a debasement and corruption of the Classical epic form into a lower level or artistic effort which proved at length so unsatisfactory as to stimulate into being a form of epic literature which demanded, on the one hand, a weaker degree of poetic genius on the part of the author, and on the other, a smaller knowledge of Classical mythology and a less intense artistic interest on the part of the reader. This was the folk-epic and

the prose romance, both widely popular in medieval Europe and both ultimately to result in a literature larger in extent and influence, if smaller in content of genius, than the Graeco-Roman epic literature.

While the Romance preserved several basic elements of the Epic, such as the larger-than-life hero, heroine and villain, the element of the supernatural and the direct intervention of divine influence into mortal affairs, and the preoccupation with warfare as a basic plot ingredient, it also incorporated a mass of material both alien and inimical to the Epic: the archetype of the Wizard, unknown in Epic literature until this era, and the use of magic per se. In the Epic, demons and mythical monsters such as the dragon and the griffin, evocations of the dead and descents into the Netherworld, appearances and actions by the Gods and Immortals had constituted almost all of the supernatural element. Magic, that is, the actions of mortal wizards and witches, enchanted weapons, spells and cantrips, the intervention of fairies and elves and such devices were foreign to the spirit of the Classical Epics, which actually and to a large part were regarded as religious works. Homer, indeed, became most certainly the "Old Testament" of the Greek religion, and Virgil to the Romans represented what we today would call an inspired, prophetic writer. So we see this debasement of artistic integrity carried out even on the minor level of the supernatural plot-element, for magic is a debasement of religion, a corruption that substitutes the charm for the prayer. (If any reader wishes to challenge the above flat statement that the Wizard was alien to Epic literature, by mentioning the witch Circe in the Odyssey and Odysseus' conversation with the Wizard Teiresias during the "descent into Hades" in the same poem, let me point out that Circe was a goddess, daughter of Helius the Sun, and the Blind Seer Teiresias was a prophet of Apollo.)

Although the Romances toyed occasionally with the "Matter of Troy", most frequently their plots were evolved from native folklore such as the Arthurian Cycle, the legends of Charlemagne and the Twelve Paladins, the fabulous history of Alexander the Great, the Crusades, and such new mythic materials. During the Late Middle Ages and early Renaissance the Romances branched out into Grail Quests and Traveler Tales, and the whole field became so hopelessly corrupt as to be laughable. This was partially due to the radical transplanting of a corpus of National myth entire into another country, as when the Italian romancers began writing Arthurian romances which were originally Celtic-Welsh-British-French, and we got such weird admixtures as the Perceforest, a vast prose compilation that links up the Grail Cycle with the legendary Alexandrian romances -- or Aristo's Orlando Furioso, whose title echoes the "wrath of Achilles" in Homer, whose characters are some from Charlemagne's France, some from Arthur's Britain, some from native Italian folklore -- all of whom go traveling around the world like characters in a Traveler Tale like John De Mandeville or Baron Munchausen. The thing becomes hopelessly tangled when the English poet Spenser borrows almost the whole style and substance of Aristo's romance, transfers the whole thing back into Britain again, and rings in traditional British fairies, Italian conjurors, and Celtic figures like the lady knight, Britomart. And there the whole thing stopped.

With the rise of the prose novel, however, we are back in business. The early novelists, as well as the later, found a fertile field awaiting their explorations: they found an almost unbelievably complex universe of styles, plot-structures, tricks, gimmicks, traditions, and forms awaiting a further translation into the novel style. So laughable had the whole thing become, though, that at first Romance was exploited for pure humor, or for satire. Gulliver's Travels, for example, is an excursion into imaginary geography not too alien to Homer's mythical Mediterranean islands or Aristo's Scythia, Cimmeria, Hyperborea and points south. The Romance concepts of imaginary journeys and quests into countries of make-believe became a province peculiar to the new field of children's books, and writers like Lewis Carroll and George MacDonald began utilizing devices whose ultimate origins were the Greek epics.

Parenthetically, let me at this point define those devices, as they are now inseperable from the Epic Fantasy, and we shall soon begin talking about them. One such traditional plot-device is to open your tale in surroundings, or among characters, familiar to your audience, and by degrees (once the reader had "identified" and become "comfortable" with them) to carry him further and further into your make-believe world. So Swift's Epic Fantasy opens with a discussion familiar to his readers, Nottinghamshire, Cambridge, etc., and through the familiar and credible device of an ocean voyage and shipwreck, carries his reader into Lilliput, Brobdignag, and the Flying Island of Laputa. So Carroll at first presents Alice in an ordinary English countryside before transporting her into Wonderland. So Baum sets Dorothy's home on a Kansas farm before a familiar Kansas cyclone carries her off to the Marvelous Land of Oz. And, indeed, so old Homer began both his epic poems against the familiar background of the Trojan War, before sending Odysseus to Ogygia, Scheria, Aeaea and the Island of the Cattle of the Sun. The Iliad, of course, being a 'War' Epic, involves no imaginary geography.

Another such device is the motivation of the Quest. Most writers in this form cannot resist lengthy and involved descriptions of the lands of their invention, and incorporate into the story vast areas of descriptive prose which deal with the boundaries, terrain, customs, religion, home-life, mating-, feeding-, and clothing-habits of the inhabitants. In order to connect these descriptive passages into a progressive narrative, and also to keep the reader interested, it became traditional to motivate the Quest or Journey. Odysseus is wandering because of the grudge Poseidon bears against him. Jason is seeking Colchis and the Fleece of Lamphystrian Zeus. Dorothy is traveling to the Emerald City to ask the Great Wizard to use his magic powers to send her home. Hercules is journeying over the earth to perform the twelve labors assigned him by King Eurystheus, in punishment for his slaughter of his own children during madness. And Alice, at least during most of the first book, is simply trying to find the White Rabbit. In the Grail Romances, Lancelot or Galahad or Perceval or Gawain are seeking the elusive Sangraal.

Other stylistic hallmarks of this species of literature are, (1) inordinate length, (2) an enormous cast of characters, and (3) travels over a vast portion of the earth. As for length, both of the Homeric poems are far longer than the 'modern' epic, Paradise Lost, which well exceeds ten thousand lines. The Finnish Kalevala is an epic so long the standard English translation is printed in two volumes. Nikos Kazantzakis' The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, most recent of the world's epic poems, is 33,333 lines long. A prose epic mentioned above, Le Perceforest, is several times the length of an average contemporary novel. The Faerie Queene is some 35,000 lines long, but the honors of being the longest poem in English belong to a weird, unreadable and nightmarish epic called The Dawn in Britain, by travel-writer Charles Daugherty, is so incredibly long it is printed in TWENTY SEVEN VOLUMES!

To return to Epic Fantasy: the field was rescued from its emergence into children's literature by a number of 19th Century English writers, earliest of whom was George MacDonald. MacDonald, author of The Princess and the Goblin and other children's fantasies, produced in 1858 a dream-epic called Phantastes, laid in an unknown nightmare world unconvincingly identified with Faerie. Another novel by the same author, Lilith, duplicated the imaginary dreamscapes of Phantastes and made quite an impression upon various writers, among them his personal friend Lewis Carroll, whose two Alice books, as well as his neglected masterpiece, Sylvie and Bruno, are dream-stories laid in nightmarishly unreal and illogical worlds.

It remained for the talented, imaginative and brilliant English poet and novelist William Morris (1834-1896) to virtually single-handedly restore this species of literature to the position and plane of serious art it held before the decline of the Epic impulse into Romance. In a series of magnificent epic-length fantasy novels, such as

The House of the Wulfings (1889), The Wood Beyond the World (1895), and his masterpiece, The Well at the World's End, he brought a new dignity, epic resonance and heroic flavor back into the field. Perhaps the time was simply ripe for such a re-emergence, or perhaps those pioneering works of Epic Fantasy were conditioned by Morris' broad literary interest in more elevated forms of Romance -- for years before any of these novels were published, he printed translations of Homer, Virgil, The Volsunga Saga, and translations of a few Icelandic sagas, plus, in 1867, an original full-length epic poem, The Life and Death of Jason. In a later essay in this series we shall examine in depth the extraordinary influence of Morris' prose romances on the evolution of Tolkien's trilogy; suffice it for now to describe these Epic Fantasies as vast novels of extreme length -- Well at the World's End must be nearly 300,000 words -- involving years-long quests over landscapes completely original and world-wide in scope...tales of heroic and magical adventure written in a crisply inventive prose that savors both of the deliciously antique language of the Grail Quests and the succinct quaintness and freshness and economy of Mallory.

At this period, bear in mind, Fantasy as a major and distinct literary field had not yet emerged fully from the mainsteam of prose literature. It was not until the first quarter of the present century, when E. R. Eddison picked up the torch from William Morris, that the Epic Fantasy became an established branch of imaginative prose. Written in 1922, The Worm Ouroboros fulfills perfectly the requirements of the Epic Fantasy Novel: enormous length, sprawling and invented landscapes, a numerous cast of characters of heroic virtue and villainy, and strong elements of supernaturalism and magic, plus a not-too-adroit blending of both War and Quest themes into one connective narrative. Eric Rucker Eddison, the Yorkshire-born author, was influenced by much the same works as William Morris, and drew from many of the same sources. An early novel, Styrbiorn the Strong, draws from the Scandanavian Heroic Literature, and his version of the Egil's Saga parallels Morris' translations from the Icelandic. There is much of the Greek Epic influence, both in the heroic mold of the people in Ouroboros, and the tags and references to Classical literature in its "sequel" or "sibling", Mistress of Mistresses (1935). The third volume in what has only recently proved a tetralogy, A Fish Dinner at Memison, brings much of the puzzling eccentricities in Eddison's prose and plot-structure into clearer focus, and introduces many of the characters in all three books as masks or receptacles for the archetypical figures of Zeus and Aphrodite. With the recent publication of the fragmentary and incomplete fourth book of the tetralogy, The Mezentian Gate, we now have in final form the supreme example (before Tolkien) of the Epic Fantasy in English literature.

Here, again, we see the beginnings of a story in familiar landscapes. The Worm opens against English contemporary scenes and is swiftly shuttled, through the dream-mechanism of MacDonald and Carroll, to the World of the Worm, unconvincingly and unnecessarily equated here with the planet Mercury. We see the Homeric war of Witchland and Demonland, and the heroic quest of the Lords Juss, Spitfire and Brandoch Daha for their lost brother, the Lord Goldry Bluszco.

The further novels in the Eddison tetralogy explore the World of the Worm in fuller detail, and elucidate the mysteries of the first book. Eddison has prepared the world for the coming of Tolkien.

2. The Tolkien Trilogy as an Epic Fantasy

Professor Tolkien, as an educated and well-read, literary-minded English scholar is certainly acquainted with the entire range of fantasy literature, with the possible exception of those advances in it made in this country under the extraordinary stimulus of the fantasy and science fiction magazines. His acquaintance with Epic and verse-saga may be assumed from his early writings on Beowulf, Chaucer and such; his knowledge of Arthurian romance is proven by his work on Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; and if his reading had not included of itself Morris and Eddison, it seems

certain that his close friends, the fantasy novelists C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams must have urged their works on him. His frequent borrowings from Morris alone are too numerous to be accidental, and shall be detailed in the next essay in this series.

In The Lord of the Rings we see what must be the finest and purest example of the Epic Fantasy yet conceived. Every attribute and element of the Epic Fantasy touched upon in the course of this study, may be found in Tolkien's masterly pages, enhanced and integrated in a final perfected form. The last inconsistencies have been resolved; the last rough outline smoothed and blent.

Tolkien's epic occurs upon Middle-Earth, a Scandanavian term meaning the World of Men. Both the Foreword and certain portions of one or another Appendix make it fairly clear that we are here dealing with our own Earth at an earlier, pre-mythological age, and certain incidents within the architecture of the tale itself identify it with our world (such as the obvious parallel between the gradual withdrawal of the last of the High Elves from Middle-Earth and Queen Egeria's leading the fairy races from the Lands of Men into Faeric on "that Friday night when the Great Star blazed high over Bethlehem, when the day of the Old Gods ended, and the new day was born, and magic perished from the earth", which is found in traditional Fairy Literature).

As his tale bears no relation to the world of today, Tolkien has the choice of either introducing a strained and artificial prefatory English opening (as in Eddison) to serve as the familiar springboard leading into his invented universe, or must make some portion of the World of the Ring correspond closely to England. He selected the latter. W. H. Auden has remarked on the slowness and difficulty of the opening forty pages of the first volume, the Shire scenes, apparently without being aware that what Tolkien was doing was in the full tradition of Homer, Swift, Carroll, MacDonald and L. Frank Baum: the Shire, lovingly and comfortably depicted, with all its tiny cultural anachronisms, such as fireworks, greeting-cards, umbrellas, doorknobs and pipe-smokers, is a parallel-in-miniature of rural England and a traditional necessity, designed to help the reader start off in familiar surroundings before brearing him away to more alien country. Stylistically, it may owe something to Kenneth Grahame and The Wind In the Willows. And -- to emphasize the allusion and make it even stronger, Professor Tolkien has utilized a remarkable device I have not seen before in Epic Fantasy. I mean his place names in and around the Shire, which is itself an English word meaning "county" are compounded from English words: the Brandywine River, Weatherton, Buckland, Bywater, etc., and such personal names as Samwise, Proudfoot, and so on. As we leave the Shire, the farther we get from it the less meaningful become place and personal names. The Mark still has traces of English meanings, and the names in Rohan are somewhat Scandanavian in flavour. Once we are out of this territory the names are completely foreign, as they would be to us were we to travel from America into Persia or China. This is an example, not only of Professor Tolkien's meticulous attention to the details and traditions of Epic Fantasy, but to his innate genius in avoiding marring his narratives with the frequent lapses in taste and invention that annoyingly deface so many earlier Epic Fantasies.

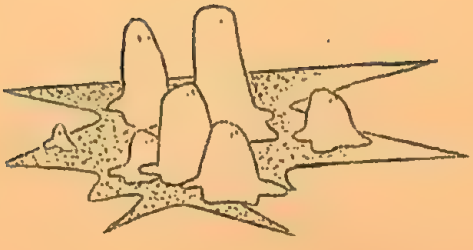
The motivation he introduces to justify his usage of the Quest theme, i.e., to avoid Sauron's certain conquest of the West, his supreme talisman, the One Ring, must be destroyed; it can only be destroyed in the place where it was fashioned, that is Mount Doom in Mordor, therefore a journey must be undertaken across the world from the Shire to the lands of the Dark Lord; this motive, I repeat, is the strongest, most consistent and logical in all of Epic Fantasy. His blending of the two main themes of the Quest and the War is beyond all question the most adroit, subtle and flawlessly merged of any in this school.

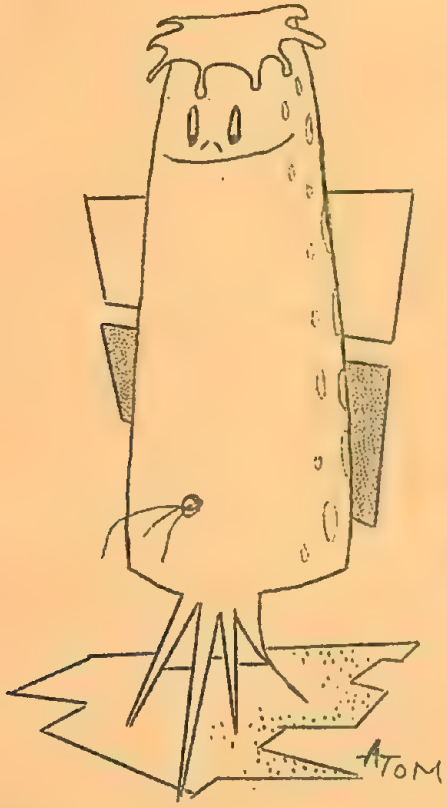
His use of the stock, archetypal figures of both Epic and Romance, such as the Wise Old Wizard (Gandalf, a far stronger and more interesting character than Eddison's Dr. Vandermast), the Villain-Hero (Boromir, a powerful blending of hero and antihero

of Homeric stature), the Faithful Companion (Samwise, who seems to owe something to Sancho Panza in another Epic Fantasy), the Wicked Magician (Saruman, a small masterpiece of characterization), and the others, his use of these familiar figures, I say, is fresh, thoroughly believable, firmly characterized and exciting. His background detail, cultural data and so on are more completely worked out, more consistent and almost more inventive (Eddison's cultural detail is broader and more imaginative) than anything I have seen in Epic Fantasy. As Mr. Auden truthfully observed, "By the time the reader has finished the trilogy, including the appendices...he knows as much about Mr. Tolkien's Middle Earth, its landscape, its fauna and flora, its peoples, their languages, their history, their cultural habits, as, outside his special field, he knows about the actual world."

How few flaws mar Tolkien's prose epic! If Sauron never really appears on stage, never seems completely a real being, and vanishes as easily as a pantomime ogre in the last act, yet reflect how powerfully, how overwhelmingly, his dark shadow hangs over the entire tale from beginning to end, permeates every scene and ever chapter with brooding menace. And if certain elements necessary to a world, even an imaginary one, seem puzzlingly absent -- such as any references to religion -- we may console ourselves with the thought that religions are also conspicuous in their absence within Eddison's world as well.

(Notes on Tolkien, II: Names and Places, is now in preparation, and, hopefully, will appear in the next issue.)





OFFSPRING

Walter Willis's SLANT STORY

Before pulling out all his dead bride's teeth, the monomanical hero of Poe's Berenice used to "repeat monotonously some common word until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition, ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind." It is possible for the same thing to happen to an entire magazine, if you have written and revised the contents yourself, typeset them by hand and checked the proofs. So by the time we had finished Slant 1 we had no idea what the contents were like.

Later I found I had a peculiar ability to assess my work as it would appear to others. Not objectively.... it takes many years before I can do that.... but subjectively from the point of view of someone else. I could pick up an addressed copy of a magazine I had produced and put myself in the position of that particular recipient, and read it quite anew as he would see it, and I could do this over and over again for everyone I knew, reading as it were a different magazine each time. I find, to take the most extreme example that Eric Frank Russell's copy reads quite differently from Eva Firestone's, and indeed when I am reading a copy of an issue just before mailing it, I have to take care that I pick one that's addressed to someone I like so that I won't feel discouraged. But at the time of Slant 1 this faculty was useless to me, because I didn't know any of the recipients: I had no idea what to expect.

I suppose we got about ten letters of comment on that first issue and we were intoxicated by this flood of unaccustomed egoboo. Most startling of all

one thoughtful person had actually sent some stamps "to help defray expenses" (we had not thought of asking for subscriptions) and the idea that people would actually pay money for something we had produced was quite overwhelming. In fact I haven't quite got over it yet. Full of fresh enthusiasm, we plunged into our second issue. I replied to everyone who had commented and those who looked literate I flattered outrageously and begged for material. Two of them came through almost immediately, Clive Jackson and Cedric Walker, neither of whom had been active in fandom before or had written professionally. Jackson's story, "The Thin Small Voice", was a beautiful little pastiche of Bradbury, tiny and brilliant like a jewel and perfect for a hand-printed fanzine.

We led off the issue with it proudly, and then there was my first attempt at humorous fiction, a piece full of bad puns about an attempt to drill a subway to Australia which foundered in a pool of universal solvent. (All the samples distilled by successful alchemists had of course made their way to the centre of the earth.) Then there was my last attempt at serious fiction, which I have just now read for the first time in twelve years and can now be objective about. It had a good plot which has still not been used elsewhere and some good lines ("Do caterpillars believe in butterflies?") but was ruined by condensation. There was enough in it to make a novel, but it was so fined down to fit into eight small pages that now I can hardly understand it myself. Then came Walker's story, which still seems to me a pretty good sf short. And there was an editorial and a column and various other fillers by me, because I couldn't get anyone else to fill up the magazine.

It was after the publication of this second issue that things really began to happen. Like for instance Ted Carnell asking our Cedric Walker to write for New Worlds. This was a big thrill -- Professional Recognition -- and I don't remember being at all put out that Ted didn't seem to be interested in my story. I don't remember if this was true humility, or whether I privately thought it was a bit too good for New Worlds -- probably both alternately. Cedric did duly appear in NW, and later in the American Marvel with a story I had rejected from Slant (only because it was too long -- we weren't all that choosy then) but he was a bit of a sobersides and after a while we lost interest and stopped cajoling material from him. We thought Jackson a much more congenial type and regarded him as our real find. This opinion was shortly confirmed by a startling letter from Forrest J Ackerman.

Ackerman was, I think, the only American to get Slant right from the start, and that was only because he appeared in the membership list of the then British Fantasy Society. I wondered at the time why that was and later found that he had done so much for British fandom during the war that it had become a tradition to list him as an honorary member of every British fan organization, local and national, and automatically to include his name on every mailing list. Hence he got Slant, and read it, and wrote offering to place Jackson's story in a prozine. It eventually appeared in the Avon Fantasy Reader, Jackson netting the vast sum of $19.00, and us a gracious acknowledgement as an "Irish fan magazine". We were utterly awed at ourselves.

We invited Jackson over for a holiday and had several story conferences, after one of which he produced "The Swordsman of Varnis," the most successful thing we ever published. It was reprinted by Other Worlds almost immediately, and later appeared in at least one hardcover anthology. We also had for No. 3 a story by E. E. Evans which Forry had sent us. Privately we didn't think it was all that good, but it was by a real live genuine professional author and we were bursting with pride. We worked four nights a week and all weekend on this third issue, which was to astonish the world.

We had learned a lot about printing by this time, but not enough. James, for instance, was still cutting his illustrations with a razor blade on plywood, and although he was

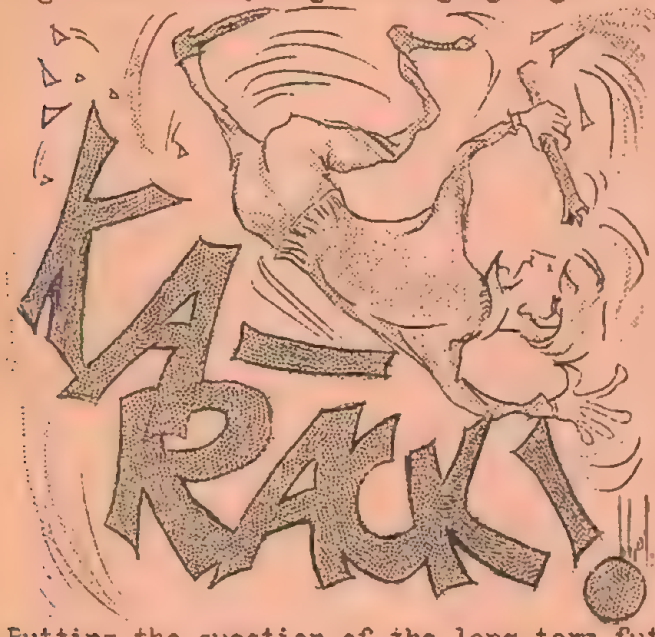
doing wonders his woodcuts still needed twice as much ink as the type, no matter how much furniture polish I rubbed into the grain. (We certainly had the most polished artwork in fandom.) So we had taken the roller off the machine and were inking by hand, a procedure for which we had trained ourselves in split second synchronization. While James was picking up the next sheet I was removing the printed one; while he was adjusting the margins I was inking the forms, one roll on the type and two on the woodcut; while he was cleansing the press and bearing down on the lever I was replenishing the inking roller on the old mirror which we used to spread the ink on. It was like nothing so much as machine guns firing through propellors, and I wonder that we survived without crushed hands. The room was a blur of motion, accompanied by rhythmic clicking and swishing noises and a pervading odour of methylated spirits and paraffin. Eventually we could print up to ten impressions a minute, and produce a whole page of the magazine in a single evening. An hour or so to distribute the type of the last page, two to set up the new one, fifteen minutes correcting and make-ready and half an hour for printing. I had wired an extension speaker and Madeleine downstairs would play us inspirational music on the record player, and later when we had finished bring up tea and help us to admire the results of the evening's work. It was a dedicated existence.

That making ready business had given us a lot of trouble at first, because we found that even taking all the trouble in the world to make sure that all the letters were the same height, by such cunning strategems as bashing them with a hammer and a piece of flat wood, some just refused to print. What you are supposed to do then is to cut out all the offending letters from a proof and paste them onto their images on the fixed backing sheet, so that they get that little extra pressure. We thought this a fiddling and time wasting job, all right for Gutenberg but not in keeping with the broad mental horizons of science fiction fans, so I experimented with various resilient backing sheets such as rubber, finally settling on cork dinner mats. With a cork dinner mat and James' strength everything printed whether it wanted to or not. Admittedly it was in three dimensions, but we saw nothing wrong with a little embossing.

We had by now bought enough type to print a full page of text and were beginning to realise what a mistake we had made in settling on that bold condensed surface. In the first place, any printing press is supposed to print an actual type area of only about two-thirds that of the chase, and our chase was crammed so full of type we didn't even need quoins. (Quoins are the little wedges printers use to hold type firmly in the chase, or frame.) On top of that, our bold condensed typeface, with its large printing area per letter, just about tripled the overload. In our innocence we hadn't quite realised all this, though I did notice after a while that the steel bed of the press had become quite convex. However I noticed also that by some happy chance the lid of the press was correppondingly concave, so we carried on determinedly. Admittedly it seemed to be getting more difficult to get an even impression, but really there wasn't much a few little pieces of type could do when levered against a cork table mat by an enthusiastic fan. We just seemed to go through a lot of dinner mats.

James had the job of operating the press because he's bigger than I, being about six feet four inches tall and the rest of him made to scale. He had the process down to

a fine art, if you can describe as a fine art anything so brutal and awesome. Having closed the press he would take a deep breath, grasp the lever firmly with both hands and push himself into the air, where he would remain for a moment before returning to the floor. I estimate he had made this ascent twelve thousand times, and the first 25 pages of Slant 3 were stacked neatly in the corner, when disaster struck. We had set up and proof-read the last page, the back cover, and were ready to run it off. The time was about ten pm. The page we were printing was even more crammed with type than usual, and James realised that an even greater effort than usual was required. Besides, this was the last page of an issue on which we had devoted our entire spare time for six months, he was going to finish the job properly. He eyed the press grimly, making sure it was firmly based. Then, retreating about three feet, he reached forward for the lever. Grasping it firmly in his two large hands, he bent at the knees and launched himself upwards in a parabolic arc, descending on the printing press from the vicinity of the ceiling like a heavyweight avenging angel. We cowered in anticipation of the crunch of hal.



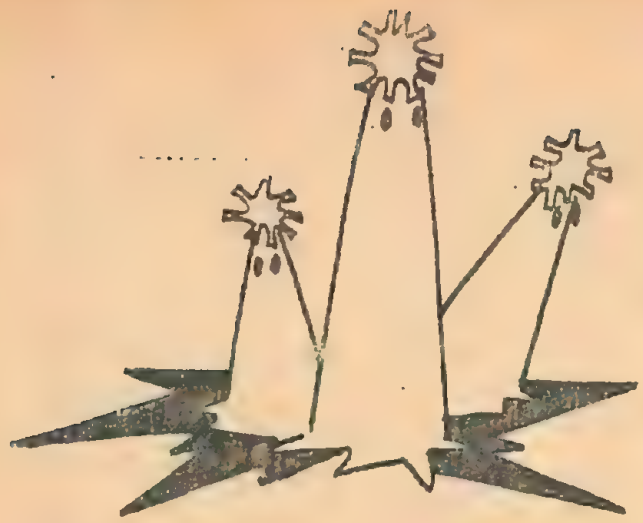
a square foot of type and paper being rammed halfway through a cork dinner mat, but instead there was an earsplitting CRACK! Pieces of shrapnell riccocheted off the walls as James fell heavily onto the table and slid to the floor with a dazed expression, still clutching a stump of lever.

It was some moments before we had recovered sufficiently from the shock to realise what had happened. It appeared that the part of the lever which had made contact with the top of the press had completely disintegrated: at least we never found any of it except a few anonymous little particles like meteorites. We had never heard of metal exploding like this, but it was understandable. Being of cast iron it could not bend, and this was its only escape from an intolerable situation.

Putting the question of the long-term future out of our minds for the moment, we concentrated on the problem of getting the present issue finished. It would be difficult without proper leverage, but surely we could manage some sort of impression for the little there was left to do. We put the press on the floor and James stood on the lid. There were a few faint marks to be seen on the paper. James tried jumping up and down. It was difficult to land accurately on such a small field but James managed it. The number of faint marks had slightly increased. There was only room for one person to stand on the press but I balanced a plank across it and we all got on... including Madeleine that is, who had rushed upstairs on hearing the cataclysm.....holding onto one another and balancing it like a seesaw. Then at a word of command uttered despairingly by me, we all jumped into the air. We made a good three-point landing but while we were still teetering about trying to keep our balance, the plank slid off onto the floor. Without bothering to get up I lifted the lid of the press. I had been willing to contemplate doing that 199 more times but it seemed it would not be necessary. A few words were now legible, but that was all. I began to have some idea of the fantastic pressure James must have developed with that lever.

That evening I wrote to Adana Ltd., manufacturers of the press, asking for a new lever. They replied that my model hadn't been in production since 1926 and no spares were available. Conceding temporary defeat I asked Ken Bulmer and Vince Clarke to run off a mimeo version of the last page, and we mailed out most of Slant 3 with it. It was an ignominious anticlimax to our six months work, and the future of Slant looked black.

(to be continued)

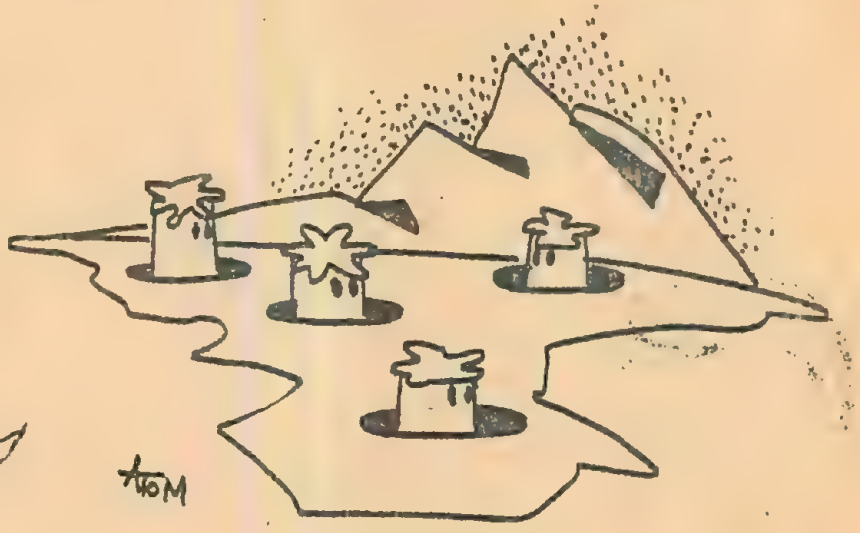


DON'T CALL US...

About a year ago, Henry Morrison asked Randy Garrett and me to speak at an ESFA meeting over in Jersey. The last echoes of the science-fiction boom had faded away, the alarming dimensions of the resultant crater were becoming increasingly noticeable, and the people at ESFA thought it would be interesting to know what a couple of writers in the field intended to do next. Garrett was there as the old pro, I as the recent entry into professional science-fiction writing. Despite the disparity of out standing in the field, our personalities, our backgrounds and our financial conditions, we both wound up by giving precisely the same answer: "I am a professional writer. My entire income comes from writing. If science-fiction can't support me, I'll write in some other field."

That was a year ago. Today, I am a fultime mystery writer, working on my fifth mystery novel (the first had already been published at the time of the ESFA meeting), and the last time I saw Randy Garrett (a week ago) he was working on a biography, for decent money.

WE'LL CALL YOU



by donald e. westlake

Isaac Asimov is writing good science fact these days. Lester del Ray is writing bad science fact. Bradbury and all the little Bradburies (Matheson, Beaumont, et al) are writing bad big-time fantasy for television and Playboy. Arthus C. Clarke is writing popular science fact. Sheckley is writing paperback mysteries. Judith Merril is anthologizing. De Camp and a lot of others aren't doing much of anything. God knows what Budrys is doing.* The list of living ex science fiction writers approaches infinity.

The field can't support us. It can't support even the big boys, the established names, and it sure as hell can't support anybody new. But what's worse, it can't even interest us.

It's time for credentials, before going into this thing any deeper. If I'm going to talk as a professional writer who isn't doing anything in science-fiction and who claims that he might have done something worthwhile if it were worth his while to do so, I ought to show my identity card. Therefore:

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Science fiction. I have sold thirteen stories, two of which have not yet been published and none of which are any damn good. I have sold to Universe, Original, Future, Super, Analog, Amazing, If, and Galaxy. A fourteenth story was sold to Fantastic Universe, which proceeded to drop dead before it could publish it. Both John Campbell and Cele Goldsmith have asked me to write sequels to novelettes of mine they had bought (I haven't written either, and won't). In a desk drawer I have twenty-odd thousand words of a science fiction novel, which is good, but which I'm not going to finish because it isn't worth my while. (Avalon pays three hundred and fifty dollars for a book, and I wouldn't support such piracy either by writing for them or buying their wares. John Campbell isn't the hero, so it can't be serialized in Analog. If finished, it would run a lot longer than forty-five thousand words, so that lets out Ace. There's no gratuitous sex, so that excludes Galaxy Beacon (or would if they were still being published). It isn't a silly satire about a world controlled by advertising agencies or insurance companies or the A&P, so it can't be serialized in Galaxy Magazine. It's in sensible English, so Amazing is out. It isn't about the horrors of Atomic War, so no mainstream hardcover house would look twice at it. I'd like to write it anyway for my own enjoyment ((you know, like a real artist-type)), but unpublished manuscripts unfortunately have a low enjoyment quota, at least for me. So the hell with it.) I have three other stories sitting around the house and all I have to do is rewrite them the way the various editors want, and they are sold. To hell with them too.

Mystery. I have sold twenty-five short stories, a couple of which are pretty good. They've appeared in Manhunt, Mystery Digest, Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, Guilty, Tightrope, 77 Sunset Strip (a one-shot, though they didn't mean it that way), Ed McBain's Mystery Book, and The Saint. One was reprinted in Best Detective Stories of 1959, four more are shortly to be anthologized here and there, and one is maybe (at the time of writing, I'm not sure yet) going to be bought for television.

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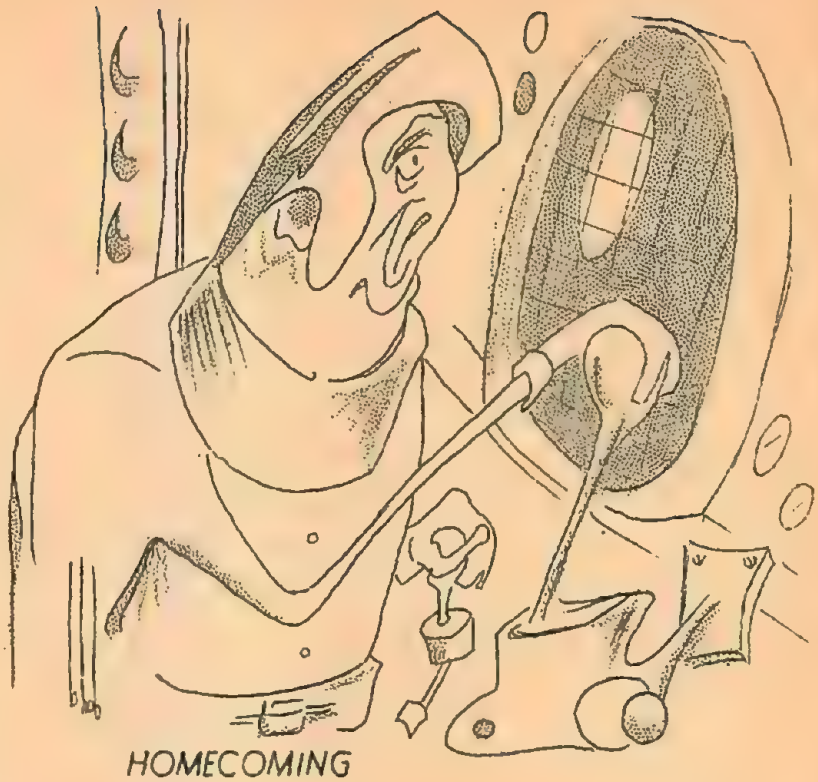
*So do lots of others: He's editing Regency Books, Vice Harlan.

I have sold three mystery novels to Random House, a fourth (aimed paperback) is currently being considered by Dell, and the fifth is in the writing. The first, The Mercenaries, won a second-place Edger from the Mustery Writers of America for best first novel of the year. Anthony Boucher called the second, in the Times, "a considerable novel", giving it a very long and very pleasant review.

I am not sitting around bragging, I'm simply trying to make something clear: I can write. I can write well. I am capable of first-class work. But the only thing I've ever written in science-fiction that I am at all proud of is a novel I'll never finish because there is economically, stylistically, and philosophically no place for it.



HOMECOMING

Do you know what I'm talking about? I cannot sell good science fiction. All right, the field can't support me, so what? I don't spend all my time writing mysteries. I could still, it would be financially feasible for me to, write an occasional science fiction story, five or six a year, or maybe cut the budget a little and write a novel. But it doesn't interest me, the requirements of the field are such that I couldn't write anything that would interest me, so how could I presume to interest you? All of the ex science fiction writers could still write in the field part time, but they don't. I guess it doesn't interest them either.

In Xero #4, a letter-writer* bitched about the deus ex psionica ending of "Out Like A Light", the second Kenneth Malone serial by Randy Garrett and Larry Harris, in Analog. I know Randy and Larry, so let me tell you something: They had a relatively good ending for that story, one that would have satisfied your letter-writer's conditions for believability. John Campbell made them rewrite the ending, to make Kenneth Malone a psuperman, a John Campbell hero. Sixty thousand words at three cents a word is eighteen hundred dollars. Plus the virtually inevitable an lab bonus (serial chapters always place first or second, or almost always) of three to six hundred dollars. Randy and Larry disliked Campbell's ending, but couldn't talk him out of it. Had they decided not to prostitute themselves on a bed of gold (the letter-writer's phrase), they would have been throwing away not only the time they'd spent on the serial, but also from nine to twelve hundred dollars in real money for each of them. At that point, I'd have rewritten the damn thing, too, and the hell with integrity. But I'm not ever going to get to that point; I'm not writing the stuff any more.

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*Don Thompson.

Now let me tell you a very sad and a very funny story. A while back, Randy Garret was staying at my place. We worked in the same room, and we were both writing stories aimed at Analog. Enjoying ourselves in the process, we both included private jokes for the other guy's benefit, and one thing I did was make a minor character, an Air Force Colonel who showed up in the last three pages of the story, the spitting image of John Campbell, betting Randy that Campbell would never notice it. I described the guy as looking like Campbell, talking like Campbell, and thinking like Campbell. We brought our respective stories in at the same time, handed them to the great man, and both went back the next week because he wanted revisions on both stories. I forget what he wanted Randy to change in his story, but I'll never in this world forget what he wanted done with mine: He wanted me to make the Colonel the lead character! I did it. Eighteen thousand words. Four hundred and fifty dollars. (PS: That's the story he wanted a sequel to. He really liked that Colonel.) (PPS: It was a better story the first time, when it was only fourteen thousand words. If I was going to rewrite, I wanted more money, so I padded four thousand unnecessary words into it. It makes for duller reading but frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.)

More recently, when Frederik Pohl took over Galaxy my agent suggested I aim a story at him, as he was in a mood to build an inventory of his own. So I researched. I read the introductions to all the Pohl-edited Star Science Fiction series, and I re-read the first and last sentences of every Frederik Pohl story I had around the house (which was a lot, since I have all but six issues of Galaxy up till this year, when I stopped buying it), and then I wrote a Frederik Pohl story. "The Spy In The Elevator". A Pohl title and a Pohl story, and a very silly insipid story it was, but by that time I was getting cynical. Pohl bought it. It was my next to the last science fiction story. It would have been the last, but a few months later my agent got me an assignment from Cele Goldsmith to do a cover story for Amazing. I'd never tried to match a story to a predrawn cover before, so I took the assignment, figuring I ought to get some enjoyment out of the novelty of the thing. And there I stopped. So far as I can see now, I'll never write another word of science fiction again. (After this article, assuming the editors at least have sense enough to read the fanzines for the temper of the readership, which judging from their competence otherwise isn't necessarily true, I don't suppose anything of mine would be too welcome on their desks anyway. I've never burned a bridge with more joy.)

Campbell is an egomaniac. Mills of F&SF is a journeyman incompetent. Cele Goldsmith is a third grade teacher and I bet she wonders what in the world she's doing over at Amazing. (I know I do.) As for Pohl, who can tell? Galaxy is still heavily laden with Gold's inventory, and when Pohl edited Star he had the advantages of no deadline and a better pay rate than anybody else in the field, so it's difficult to say what Galaxy will look like next year, except that Kingsley Amis will probably like it.

I will not end with a panacea. I have none. A lot of professional science fiction writers have moved on to other fields in the last few years, and a lot more haven't bothered to take their place. You may have wondered why, and since I'm one of them I thought I'd tell you, speaking only for myself. I don't know whether I speak for any of the others or not, but I suspect so. (The guy who beat me out for the first place Edgar, by the way, was Jack Vance, another escapee.)

I don't know why science fiction is so lousy. I suspect there are a lot of reasons. But I can at least hint at one reason which has special reference to you. At the ESFA meeting I mentioned earlier, Sam Moskowitz mentioned a story from Weird Tales, some time in the thirties. All the members had read it, and remembered it. A little later, Randy Garrett mentioned a story from the previous month's Analog. Two members present had read it.

The Silver Dagger

fanzine reviews by Buck Coulson

PODIUM

(Les Nirenberg, 1217 Weston Rd., Toronto 15, Ontario - supplement to QUE PASADO) Fandom seems to be brimming over with social consciousness these days. HABAKKUK delves into such subjects as the Beat philosophy, the use of mescalin and student riots; WARHOON discusses political philosophy; KIPPLE usually manages a few comments on the position of the non-conformist; other fanzines run articles on current events. Now Les comes up with (more or less accidentally, as is the way with most good fan discussions) a 23-page symposium on the place of the homosexual in society. (By "accidental" I mean that Les did not set out deliberately to start a discussion on homosexuals. A chance remark in QUE PASADO led to letters of comment, which led to letters of criticism, which led to PODIUM. The moral here is that a good editor simply publishes material which may cause readers to comment and is ready to give space to any subject which his readers show interest in. Les is proving to be an excellent editor.)

PODIUM contains a pretty good cross-section of opinions, from the confessed homosexuals who think that their way of life is "superior" to that of us mundane types (how many times have fans expressed this opinion in regard to fandom?) to the belligerent heterosexuals who feel that homos are a rather disgusting group who possibly have thei

rights but who should be watched carefully to make sure that they don't exceed them.

Of course, the trouble with all discussions of this sort is that the group under discussion must, in the nature of things, be regarded as a group with specific characteristics, whereas any group is actually composed of individuals with widely varying characteristics. One homosexual of my acquaintance happens to be one of my favorite people; my feelings towards others renge from mild liking (fine as pen-pals or for seeing once a year but I wouldn't want to live near them) to absolute loathing. But, despite the necessary drawbacks of the method of discussion, PODIUM comes off very well, if you're at all interested in this sort of thing. It's certainly the most interesting fanzine I've received in the past few months, at least.

PARSECTION 9

(George Willick, 856 East St., Madison, Indiana - bi-monthly - 20¢)
This suffers slightly in comparison with PODIUM; mainly because most of the discussions seem to have been deliberately fostered by the editor, and the readers consequently aren't as interested (they aren't volunteering indormation; they're being prodded in order to produce reactions). This editorial, for example, comes out in favor of fan feuds -- managing it largely by deliberately ignoring the differences between arguments, discussions, and feuds. It will probably draw comment, but it won't lead to anything vitally interesting.

Aside from an article in which Donald Wollheim compares Claude Degler to Joseph Smith (contrasting success and failure of similar men -- John Dowie might be the more exact religious counterpart of Degler) the remaining material seems rather innocuous this time. Some beautiful artwork, mainly by Prosser and Joni Cornell, though such lesser-known (to general fandom) artists as Len Rich, Dick Schultz, Randy Scott and Mike Johnson also have some nice material. Cover by Steve Stiles, which looks...no, I won't say it.

One of the best items is a letter from Wollheim, pretty effectively disposing of the argument that editors shouldn't change authors' story titles for publication.

MONDAY EVENING GHOST 12

(Bob Jennings, 3819 Chambers Drive, Nashville 11, Tennessee - 15¢ - six-weekly)
Along with social-consciousness, fandom is also sprouting with projects for the glorification of itself (sometimes known as narcissism, or Advanced Navel Contemplation). The Fanac Poll wasn't formal enough for Willick (or maybe he just got tired of waiting for it) so he agitated for the more dignified Fan Awards. Fans may now indulge in a positive orgy of back-patting. Some fanzine (SHAGGY?) had a small flurry some time ago about Forry Ackerman willing his collection of stf material to fandom, along with enough money to set up a Foundation to preserve it. Jennings, apparently unwilling to wait for Forry to die, is trying to get support for a separate Foundation, where <u>all</u> fans can will their collections. (Fans who might not want to turn over their collections for the betterment of fandom when they die are obvious traitors to the cause.) It would also loan out rare items, so that even fans who had no hope of obtaining their own copies could still fondle the historic pages.

GHOST is generally stf-centered, with this issue featuring an article on, and an Index to, THRILL BOOK. (There's also a report on the Midwestcon by Emile Greenleaf, but we'll overlook that.) There is also a six-page editorial, and I have admiration for anyone who can write a six-page editorial -- or a six-page article, or a six-page poem, or a six-page story, or.....) Short letter column this time; usually it's fairly long, and sometimes it's good. (Lately it's been taken up with this Foundation thing, but I suppose that will wear off in time.) I would urge all serious science-fiction readers to get GHOST, but what would a serious science-fiction reader be doing reading XERO? Oh well, even XERO readers might like it.

OOPSLA! 30

(Gregg Calkins, 1484 East 17th South, Salt Lake City 5, Utah - irregular, to say the least - no price listed) And you can't get the next issue by writing a letter of comment, either, because there may not be any next issue. Maybe the best thing to do is to write Gregg and ask him how to get the mag. This seems to be Serious Fanzine month around here; OOPS is concerned with Robert Bloch's twenty-fifth anniversary as a stf and fantasy writer (it's less than two years late), with some not particularly serious articles on Bloch by Walt Willis and Dean Grennell and 12 pages devoted to a bibliography of Bloch's writing.

The non-Bloch material includes the editorial, in which Gregg explains why there may not be another issue, Harry Warner's comments on the vast increase in fan publishing in the past decade, Bob Tucker's article on the forthcoming revised edition of THE NEO-FAN'S GUIDE (which is somewhat over two years late), a four-page bibliography of Heinlein's writing, and an index to the first 30 issues of OOPSLA! Lovely front and back covers by Barr make sure that the mag finishes -- if it has finished -- in style.

Personally I'm not much interested in isolated bibliographies. If bibliographic material is to be used as reference (and what else is it good for?) it should be collected in one volume where it can be found -- what's the use in having an article which tells you where to locate a specific Heinlein story if you can't first locate the article? Some fans seem to appreciate it, however, so I suppose it does have some use. Anyway, all fans of Bloch should certainly want this issue of OOPSLA!

LES SPINGE 6

Hiding behind pseudo-HYPHEN covers is
(edited by Dave Hale, 12 Belmont Road, Sturbridge, Worcs., England)
Actually this issue is produced by Ken Cheslin, but future irregular issues will be handled by Hale so you might as well send him your letters. Despite the covers, this isn't HYPHEN, by a long way (and possibly it's just as well, at that.) SPINGE is not a serious fanzine. It is, according to various statements within it, a Wild Abandoned fanzine. Of course, it has been abandoned -- by Cheslin, at least, and possibly individual copies have been abandoned by individual recipients. I can't guarantee the Wild part, though the practice in the present issue of having long articles interrupted in the middle by full-page filler items is at least disconcerting and might be construed as being Wild. A letter column takes up approximately half the magazine -- due to irregular page-numbering and irregular-sized pages it's difficult to tell exactly. At any rate, both the incoming and outgoing editors seem more interested in fannish doings and having a good time than in analyzing Bertrand Russell or in discussing the relation of the prostitute to fandom (or could that be considered under the heading of "having a good time" too?) From what little I know of Hale (he was included in the last tape Cheslin sent me) he seems a little saner than Cheslin, which may or may not prove a handicap in fandome. (Incidentally, Ken introduced his partner in crime on the tape as "Dive Ile"; for a while I thought he was talking about the runway in a burlesque house.) SPINGE is moderately enjoyable and strictly unmemorable.

SKYRACK 38

(Ron Bennett, 13 West Cliffe Grove, Harrogate, Yorkshire, England - USAgent, Bob Pavlat, 6001 43rd Ave., Hyattsville, Maryland - biweekly - 6 for 35¢ - NO TRADES) In the last issue, Bennett pulled a scoop by receiving the results of the SeaCon's Hugo Awards, running them off for SKYRACK, mailing the issue and getting into my grubby fingers in Indiana in just five days after the end of the convention. AXE, which also came out promptly, and started 3,000 miles closer, in New York, only beat him by a day. This

issue is mostly concerned with the TAFF results (Ellik won) but also comments on recent fanzines and other fan news. SKYRACK is published strictly to record British fan doings; if you're interested in them, you'll enjoy it, if you aren't you won't.

As long as I've mentioned AXE I might as well say that it's published by Larry and Noreen Shaw, comes out on as relentless a bi-weekly schedule as FANAC used to, costs 10¢ and is up to issue #13 today. (By the time the Lupoffs publish, it will be 14 or 15 -- or maybe 25 or 26; you never can tell.) It offers the same brief news notes that FANAC used to -- today you can get AXE for the hot-off-the-press news and FANAC for a later and slightly more detailed version. AXE has by now surpassed both FANAC and S F TIMES as the leading publication of both fan and pro news; it's nearly always the first of the newsletters to announce a new item. (Later, FANAC shows up with the details of why the event occurred, and S F TIMES tells why it shouldn't have happened.)

- RSC

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A FEW MORE FANZINES NOTED BRIEFLY:

CRY 153 (The CRY Gang, Box 92, 507 3rd Ave, Seattle 4, Wash - essentially monthly - 25¢, 5 for $1, 12 for $2.)

The Hugo winner for 1959 shows vast improvement in this first issue after a time-out for the SeaCon. The Atom cover is much superior to the usual CRY cover fare, the interior layout and general appearance is cleaner and less cluttered than usual (although still almost starkly simple; this is not a fault), and the material, while down the usual CRY alley, shows more sparkle than it has for a while. Page three is, as ever, as lively and informative a page as exists in all of fandom. Poul Anderson's SeaCon speech ("The Rituals of Science Fiction") is printed. Top in the issue, against no mean competition, is the first part of a three-part serial by John Berry. Add the usual CRY features, including a typically indescribable letter from neofan Avram Davidson, and you have a dandy issue.

Ever since winning its Hugo, CRY seemed to have suffered a letdown. Now that it is no longer the immediate past champion, and with a respite from publishing under its belt, CRY has come back stronger than ever.

THE COMPLETE MAD CHECKLIST (Fred von Bernewitz, 12006 Remington Drive, Silver Spring, Maryland. $1.50) Of course Fred is here in New York, but that's the address in the Checklist, so I suppose it's the one he wants used. Except for the original Don Martin cover, this 100-page publication contains no "material" in the usual sense of the word. It does contain complete tables of contents for MAD Comics (issues 1 - 23), MAD Magazine (issues 24 - 66), and the MAD Annuals, paperbacks, and hardbound books; plus listings by story title, writers, and artists. Of interest to specialists.

SAM 4 (Steve Stiles, 1809 Second Avenue, NY 28, NY; no frequency or price listed, but a few postage stamps and/or small coins are never unwelcome.) In this era of massive fanzines settling Cosmic Issues (count the o's in those words) a jolly little personalzine like SAM is most welcome. Further, Steve is doubly qualified to produce one, as he is both a writer with an easy-reading style ideally adapted to this kind of prose, and a highly talented artist. Of the six pages plus cover, I found the Stewart pastiche most fun.

AMRA v2n15 (George Scithers, box 9006 Rosslyn, Arlington, Va. $2 for 10 issues, which will 15 months to reach you. Er, I mean, 8 a year, there fore 10 will take....) Also special interest, devoted to Conan and other High Adventurers. Thish is topped by some utterly gorgeous Krenkel art...but AMRA is always a lively and attractive forum if you have any interest in this type of material.

- RAL

PART 7

IN THE SERIES

AND ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME

THE WILD ONES

BY DON THOMPSON

ILLOS STOLEN BY MAGGIE CURTIS

Superman is a sissy.

Oh, sure, he can withstand A-bombs, jump from Earth to another solar system without kicking Earth out of orbit, melt metal with heat vision, look through walls with x-ray vision, travel into past or future (sometimes being corporeally present, sometimes invisible and intangible -- but always ineffective) and do all sorts of wondrous things.

But he can't grow larger than the solar system or smaller than an atom. He can't fight a duel with comets as weapons, ski on stars, raise the dead, stop time or talk with God.

But the Spectre could. And did.

The Spectre could have given Superman cards and spades and still beaten him soundly, while simultaneously trouncing Batman, Captain Marvel and all the rest. The Spectre was one comics character who really was omnipotent. He could, quite literally, do anything. Nothing could kill him, because he was already dead. He was an honest-to-goodness ghost, with the most amazing range of powers of any comic book hero.

The Spectre, like Superman, was a creation of the fertile mind of Jerry Siegel, whose byline appeared on all the stories. The artist who took credit for drawing the strip was Bernard Baily, who apparently was proud of his work because he signed it both at the beginning and at the end of each story. Baily also was credited with the early adventures of Hourman, back when Hourman took dope to be superhuman.

Siegel, apparently flushed with the success of Superman, lavished still more powers on the Spectre. Too many powers, as it turned out. For a while, it's fascinating to follow the adventures of a hero who can do anything, but only for a while. After that, it gets kind of boring.

About the only thing the Spectre never did was to get a comic of his own. The Spectre appeared in MORE FUN COMICS #52 (Feb 40) to 106 (late 45) inclusive and was a member of the Justice Society of America in ALL-STAR COMICS for quite a while.

Possibly because of his omnipotence, he was relegated to the back of the book after a while. A hero who can do anything and is totally invincible doesn't create much suspense. Besides, he was frightening.

The Spectre was the ghost of Jim Corrigan, a "hard-fisted" police detective who was clobbered by crooks who had kidnapped his fiancee, dumped into a barrel, encased -- still alive -- in concrete, and chucked into the river. You can't get much deader than that.

Jim's spirit rose from the barrel and headed heavenward, with only a momentary pang about leaving earth and his fiancee, Clarice Winston. He was rather looking forward to eternal rest, but a voice (obviously God, although never explicitly stated to be Him) told him that he could not have his eternal rest until he had wiped out all crime on earth. All of it. A pretty tall order, but he was promised special abilities.

He returned to the river where his body lay and discovered that he did not need to breathe, that he could walk on water, levitate or disappear at will, grow or shrink to whatever size he wished, and walk through walls. Armed with these weapons, and many more he didn't yet know about, he set out to rescue Clarice from the gangsters who had killed him.

38 This was where the first installment of the two-part origin story (#52-53, February and March 1940) ended.

The second began, with a very brief synopsis (52 words), exactly one panel later. The last panel of the first installment showed Jim walking into the wall of a warehouse. The first panel of the second chapter showed him emerging, halfway through the wall, in the room where "Gat" Benson's gangsters were menacing Clarice.

The poor damned hoods never had a chance. Their bullets either bounced off him or went through him with no effect, whichever he wished. One by one he called them to him and had them look into his eyes, where they apparently looked either upon Death incarnate or the very pits of Hell itself. They either died or went mad on the spot.

However, one of the shots fired during this brief melee hit Clarice, and she was dying. Corrigan touched the wound and the wound closed, healed and vanished as if it had never been.

Since Clarice had fainted, he was able to explain away the death or insanity of the baddies quite easily -- especially since he then distracted her attention by breaking their engagement. He felt, with some justification, that a ghost was no sort of husband for a fine girl like Clarice. Not knowing his reasoning -- or even that he was a ghost -- Clarice refused to let him go and this led to the stock comic book situation of the heroine chasing the reluctant hero with matrimony as her object. But there were a couple of differences. Corrigan was more than willing to marry her but felt his lack of mortality (not necessarily immortality; with his powers, it isn't inconceivable that he could have wiped out crime and got what was always referred to as his eternal rest) prevented this, I'm not sure why; also, Clarice was in love with Jim, not his alter ego, the Spectre. Believe me, nobody but the most ardent necrophile could have loved the "grim ghost."

For some reason, it was necessary for Jim to make a costume for the Spectre the hard way, sewing it laboriously by hand (a strange talent to be possessed by a hard-fisted police detective, no?) when he could have created it out of moonbeams, spider webs, or cool night air with a perfunctory thought.

Possibly his lack of skill as a tailor accounted for the bagginess of the green shorts which he wore over a skin so deathly white that it looked almost as if he were wearing snowy tights. Green gloves, cloak and hood and floppy green boots completed the costume. The face of the Spectre was the same deathly white, with dark, shadowed eyes and a grim, tight-lipped mouth. He was quite imposing, more than slightly frightening.

In order to assume the identity of the Spectre, Corrigan needed no convenient phone booth, no facile alibi to explain his absence from the scene. He could go right on about his business, talking, eating, sleeping, fighting crime while the Spectre, like a supernatural amoeba, split invisibly off from his body and took on a corporeal form of his own. The two halves of Corrigan's personality could exist simultaneously and independently, so the problem of protecting a secret identity never arose.

Naturally, Corrigan the cop was assigned to catch the Spectre, who naturally got the bulk of the blame for the rash of supernatural crime which popped up about that time. Corrigan did catch himself, too, but of course no one could hold the Spectre after Corrigan "caught" him.

Naturally, too, the Spectre had nothing to do with these crimes. They were caused by necromancers, wizards and ghosts without Spectre's moral fibre. Zar, for example. Zar was a wizard who had the same powers as the Spectre (though presumably from the devil, not God) but who had been dead longer and was consequently more experienced in using them. The Spectre chased him from dimension to dimension, was trapped for a spell in Zar's paralysis ray and came out second in a comet-hurling duel.

In a more or less typical story (MORE FUN "61), a rash of newspaper headlines praising the Spectre arouse the wrath of the police chief, who orders Corrigan to arrest the Spectre. Then a phone call comes in; one of Center City's biggest promoters has been threatened by the Spectre. Corrigan and the chief go to the man's house and see him turn to gold before their eyes. A witness rushes into police headquarters, says he knows who is responsible for the "golden curse" death threats (which all wealthy men are getting now) and then turns to gold before he can name the villain.

"Corrigan departs from headquarters a very bewildered chap indeed" and finds himself confronted by a feeble social outcast who thrusts free samples of chewing gum upon him. Noticing a car trailing him, Jim plays a hunch about the gum and turns himself to gold. Two men jump from the car, pick him up (yes, I know a six-foot man of gold would weigh more than two men could left, but they did) and put him into the car, drive to a bridge and toss him in the river. The Spectre pops out of the water a moment later and follows them, foiling another assassination attempt by turning the gum to worms. When one of the hoods calls the boss to report the worms, the Spectre shrinks, enters the phone, and races through the wires, only to be stymied when the boss hangs up. Returning to the hideout, the Spectre reveals himself to the hoods, just as they turn into gold statues.

That evening, Corrigan goes to visit Clarice and meets Gustave Gilroy, who knows a scientists who is trying to change the atomic structure of objects. Corrigan calls upon the scientist and is lassoed around the neck and hanged by a booby trap while a voice booms out "Thus perish those who oppose the Spectre." Corrigan alters his body so it becomes one-dimensional and drops free of the noose, slips through the wall and grabs the scientist. The scientist is unable to tell him who hired him because he doesn't know, so the Spectre bombards him with L-rays, which cleanse his mind of all evil. Says the scientist: "I see the error of my ways! From now on I will lead an honest existence!" (These L-rays, incidentally, were a bunch of letter "L's" which came out of the Spectre's eyes.)

He returns to Clarice's home to find that she is going to surrender herself to the bogus Spectre, who has threatened her father. She meets a green-robed figure on the docks and is struggling with him when the real Spectre shows up -- but the Spectre suddenly disappears, caught by "an occult occurence" (this happened in several stories, with no explanation and varying results) which flung him an hour back in time as Jim Corrigan. With the extra time on his hands, he arrests the Spectre and turns him over to the police chief, after which the Spectre vanishes and goes back to the docks to nail Gustave (now called Gustaf, oddly) Gilroy, who was the man masquerading as the Spectre. Gilroy confesses, then commits suicide by turning himself to gold. The story ends with the chief ordering Corrigan to continue pursuing the Spectre, despite the fact that he has been cleared.

The theme of classical gods has long been used in comic series. Captain Marvel obtained his powers from six "gods" (such as Solomon, an odd god you'll agree) and the Bouncer was known as a personal descendent of a Greek god. But gods are one thing and God is another, and the Spectre used to talk with God. Actually and literally, not just the one time Jim Harmon mentioned in his Justice Society article, but many times. In fact, whenever the Spectre came up against a foe who was worthy of his mettle, such as the forementioned Zar, he generally got his tail in a crack and had to ask for extra powers, which were always granted. He kept all of these powers, too.

Those with deep religious convictions might be a bit annoyed to find God credited with a rather shoddy trick designed to keep the Spectre working for him. In one instance, just as Clarice is about to be killed, the Spectre is called away by God. Clarice has as bullet heading toward her skull and will be a goner by the time Spec returns. God, it seems, has reconsidered, decided that Spec is getting a raw deal, and is offering

him a choice of taking his eternal rest now or going on to wipe out all crime. Of course, should he decide to take up the harp, that's the end of Clarice. Since staying in Heaven would doom the girl (who presumably has not led a blameless life, else he would have been assured that she would join him in Heaven), he chooses to return to earth and finish off crime. It was a stacked deck.

However, much later on, God made up for this (sort of like with Job, I guess) by restoring Jim Corrigan to life without removing any of his powers. This happened after a supposedly funny character named Percival Popp (the super cop) appeared on the scene.

The level of humor exemplified by this big-nosed, buck-toothed and bespectacled little runt is pretty well indicated by his name. He had unevenly crew cut and rather wild hair which varied from red to brown to black, and protruding eyes. He wanted to be a detective and plagued Corrigan by following him about, interfering in his cases and generally making a pest of himself. While searching for evidence, Percy was about to dive off the pier at the very spot where Corrigan's concrete-encrusted corpse lay on the river bottom. A quick request to God for assistance to prevent discovery brought the ultimate -- Corrigan was restored to life in his own body (thoughtfully freed from the concrete first) without losing his identity and powers as the Spectre.

The Spectre himself could bring people back from the dead and cure the incurable. Unfortunately, Popp was one malignant frowth he couldn't lick. Percival Popp (the super cop) began dominating the stories and sharing the billing and the whole series degenerated into slapstick -- badly done slapstick. The Spectre no longer disposed of his enemies in such gruesome fashion, although his powers remained the same. Not that the Spectre's powers weren't spectacular enough even when they weren't gruesome. He could, as shown in the "golden curse" story, trace phone calls by shrinking himself to molecular size and following the impulse through the telephone wires, exiting at the receiver of the caller's phone -- unless the caller hung up too soon. (This trick has been given to the revived version of the Atom). If the phone trick didn't get the information he wanted, he could use mental telepathy or call on God. I suppose he could have cast runes if he'd wanted to bother.

Some time after Percival came along, the Spectre and Jim Corrigan parted company. Corrigan entered the service to fight the Nazis and Japs while Spec stayed behind to fight crime, working with Percy in a state of invisibility.

Corrigan never returned. Eventually the whole series just sort of dwindled away and, when MORE FUN COMICS became strictly humorous (to use the word loosely), the Spectre finally achieved his long-sought eternal rest.

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MORE FUN COMICS had a checkered career. The earliest issue I have seen contained the origin of the Spectre, and that was 52. Other characters in that 64-page issue were "Wing Brady," by Tom Hickey, a pretty poor Foreign Legion strip; "Biff Bronson" by Al Sulman and Koppy, which featured a brawny hero and his fat friend who, in this issue, fought off an army of robots (it was actually a serial, but I'm sure Biff and Dan, his fat friend, won in the end); "Radio Squad," a police

strip originated by Siegel and Shuster, now written by Siegel and drawn by Martin Wheeler; "Lieut. Bob Neal of Sub 662," a Navy strip by B. Hirsch and Russ Lehman which was no better than "Wing Brady"; "King Carter" by Paul J. Lauretta was a mediocre adventure strip; "Detective Sergeant Carey" by Joe Donohoe, a mystery strip, was a lacklustre job; "Sergeant O'Malley of the Red Coat Patrol" was a routine Canadian Mounties story drawn by Jack Lehti, who later did "Crimson Avenger" and currently does the religious comic strip "Tales From the Great Book"; and Bart Tumey's "Bulldog Martin" was a cops and robbers story with the added fillip of an invisibility potion.

None of these strips, all of which were holdovers from MORE FUN's pre-costume hero days, lasted very long once the superguys, Spectre their vanguard, began their invasion of the pages of MORE FUN. Biff Bronson did have enough of a following to make the first issue or two of ALL-STAR (he was out when the Justice Society was formed in '43), and MORE FUN was popular enough to be a monthly. In issue '55 Dr. Fate was added, and six months later the lineup still included Detective Sergeant Carey, Lieut. Bob Neal, Radio Squad (now drawn by Chad), Biff Bronson, and Sergeant O'Malley. Congo Bill, a jungle strip by George Papp which lasted until just a few months ago (with several metamorphoses), and Captain Desmo (an airplane strip by "Win") had been added.

MORE FUN eventually served as the birthplace of Green Arrow, Aquaman, and Johnny Quick, and featured the adventures of Superboy. When, with issue #106, MORE FUN regressed into a theoretically humorous publication featuring Genius Jones (by Alfred Bester ((!)) and Stan Kaye), and Henry Boltinoff's "Dover and Clover," Superby, Aquaman, Johnny Quick and Green Arrow moved over to ADVENTURE COMICS. The Spectre and Doctor Fate were dropped.

Doctor Fate sprang upon the scene without benefit of an origin story. He was a wizard of incredibly ancient origin and virtually unlimited powers. He said that he had been placed on earth by the elder gods long before the time of man. He spoke familiarly of ancient Egypt and Chaldea and admitted imprisoning an evil wizard many, many thousands of years before. He now dwelt in a doorless and windowless tower in "witch-haunted Salem," surrounded by musty tomes, weapons and devices both of advanced science and advanced necromancy. He exited from his tower by walking through walls or by using some machine.

A girl named Inza, whose presence in his life was never explained, wandered at will about the world and called on Dr. Fate whenever, as she frequently was, she was in difficulty. She usually got in trouble as a result of some slumbering wizard's awakening or some bush league Merlin stumbling across the Book of Thoth. Things like that happened all the time.

Dr. Fate was clad in blue (or, on the cover, purple) tights with yellow boots, shorts, gloves and cape. On his chest was a large golden medallion of unspecified purpose, strung on a cord about his neck. His face was completely smooth except for two eye-holes. This helmet was lateraltered, unfortunately, but this was the original costume.

Dr. Fate had achieved complete control of energy and any blows or bullets directed at him were turned into power for him. He could emit rays of energy which were capable of knocking over buildings or thoroughly disposing of unsavory characters. He also had a crystal ball and various spells at his command. He could fly, too.

Doctor Fate was obviously the creation of someone who had read a great deal of H. P. Lovecraft. The hints of elder gods and vanished civilizations, of wizardry which was actually a form of science far beyond what we have attained and "witch haunted Salem," which reminds one somehow of Arkham, all point to a familiarity with Lovecraft's mythos. Some of the Doctor Fate stories were written by Gardner F. Fox; I do not know who drew them.

A better than average Doctor Fate story (#55 and #56 of MORE FUN) dealt with the evil Wotan (apparently unrelated toNorse mythology,) this Wotan had a green skin , a Mephistophelean face, wore red tights with a high, stiff, flaring collar and a green floor - length cape. He opened his campaign against Doctor Fate by making a puppet of a normal man by means of a glowing crystal globe and ordering him to kill the girl, Inza. The dupe is strangling her when Fate arrives, rescues the girl, frees the man from Wotan's spell and saves them both from a fire started by the angry Wotan. The story is then interrupted for precisely four panels, while Doctor Fate explains that he has the power to control energy and can convert it into matter and vice versa. This, friends, is the origin story of Doctor Fate; it was his first appearance. He then called upon Wotan with Inza and was set upon by gorillas. Fate subdues one gorilla, aut another has set upon Inza and Doctor Fate transfers his strength to her body. Wotan, taking advantage of his momentary weakness, tries to stab him, but is not quick enough. Doctor Fate has a reserve store of energy and is able to withstand Wotan while Inza overpowers the gorillas. Wotan then turns on Inza and surrounds her with flames of energy just as strong as Fate's. Fate counters by clouting Wotan with a roundhouse right ("Sometimes I think a good fight accomplishes more than all the learning in the world.") and throws him out the window which, we now learn, is many stories above the street.

The next issue's story opens with Fate and Inza going to the land of the dead to make sure Wotan is there. He forces the boatman to take them across the Styx where they pass through the seven gates to the regions of dead souls (the gates are iron. copper silver, gold, "the unknown grey metal", alabaster and emerald, in that order) and climb the stair of judgment to meet the gods of old. At the top of the stair is Wisdom, who rules the world. Fate and Inza stand atop the staircase, shielded by Fate's cloak, in a blinding light while Wisdon tells them that Wotan lives and says:

Doctor Fate arrives in time to counter the machinery of Wotan and beats him soundly with his fists, and chains him to the earth "as Prometheus was chained to a rock." Fate and Inza relax and enjoy the beauties of the earth while "Wotan -- in a magical trance -- is encased for eternity in an air bubble and hidden beneath the earth he would have destroyed." Somewhat later, he was freed by another of Doctor Fate's opponents and was eventually destroyed by Doctor Fate.

Doctor Fate apparently became a very popular strip because he soon began taking over MORE FUN's lead spot and cover from the Spectre. And then came the big change in Doctor Fate.

After he had been established as an ancient wizard who never removed his helmet, during the first few stories, he suddenly pulled a complete switch. He started by showing his face to Inza, when she was mooning over some young lovers (sort of as a consolation prize, I gathered). My reaction on first looking in ~~ØVAØØØVVØ VØØØØ~~ Doctor Fate's face was one of disappointment. He didn't look like anything special.

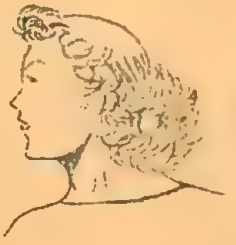
And, starting with the next issue of MORE FUN ('37), he wasn't. You recall that bit about his being thousands of years old? The writer of the series conveniently forgot. After several issues, they finally got around to doing his origin.

In the Valley of Ur, "in the year 1920 or thereabouts," an Egyptologist named Sven Nelson, with his young son Kent, has come to learn who built the pyramids. He has a theory that people from another planet built them; he doesn't think the Egyptians know enough to do the job.

While his father studies a strange language engraved on the walls, young Kent Nelson explores the ruins. He finds a man standing entombed in an open casket and, following telepathed directions, turns a lever and frees the man from suspended animation.

The man, whose name is Nabu the Wise, is close to half a million years old and "was born on the planet Cilia as she swung in her orbit passed (sec) the earth." His people built the pyramids. He and Kent discover that Sven Nelson, Kent's father, is dead of poison gas prepared to kill any who learned the secret of the chamber. They bury Sven and Nabu says, "I will try to repay you for your loss by teaching you the secrets of the universe," which he does. He then gives young Kent the costume and the name of Doctor Fate and disappears without a word of explanation from anybody. Since these stories appeared in the very early 40's, Doctor Fate had suddenly gone from being millenia old to being barely 20. The Lovecraftian aura was shed with the years.

After this, the series went rapidly downhill. The beautifully mysterious face covering was sawn off just below the eyes, revealing the Doctor's nose and mouth and concealing only his hair, forehead, and the area about his eyes. His powers were even more sawn off.



Starting with the idea that he was only invulnerable from outside harm and still needed air, the writer or writers soon developed this idea to the point where Fate was depressingly mortal. If you cut off his air,

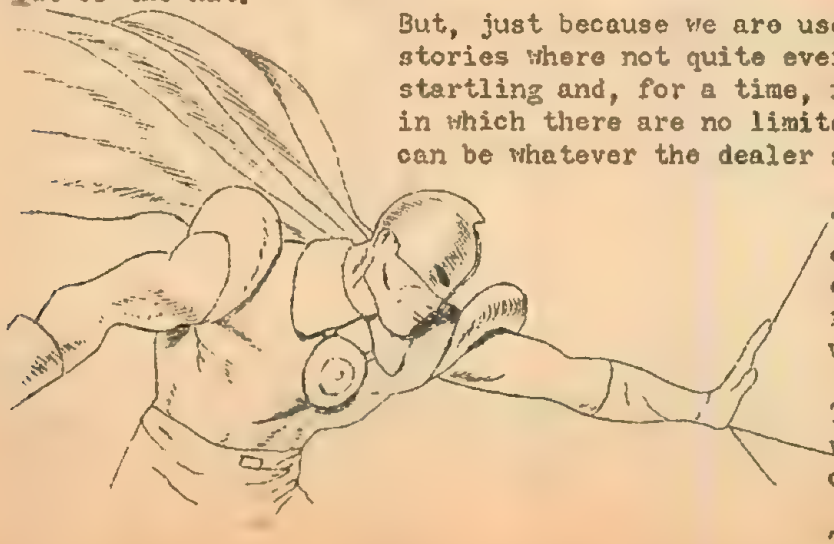
Dr. Fate would lose consciousness, so gas or drown him. (Okay, so far.) Now, if you strangle a person you cut off his air, too, so they could strangle him into unconsciousness. (Well...) A good blow in the solar plexus will knock the air out of a guy too, so... (Oh, the hell with it!)

So what happened to his super powers? Well, he could still fly and he was still immune to bullets, but that's all. And he stopped chasing wizards and concentrated on petty thugs. And he started making ridiculous backchat with the thugs as he fought with them -- with bare fists, not magic ("What are you, the joker?" *sock* "Ouch! I feel like the deuce!" replies the crook -- crooks usually got the best of the verbal interchange, though Fate naturally triumphed physically). And he decided to justify his name by actually becoming a doctor. He got through medical school in one heck of a hurry and became an interne within half a page. And he used modern medicine, too, completely dropping the wizard bit.

And so he became less of a super hero and more possible (loosely speaking) and more vulnerable. And more monotonous. So, when MORE FUN retooled for comedy, they didn't bother to transfer Dr. Fate over to ADVENTURE, as they did Superboy, Johnny Quick, and Aquaman. They also cancelled his membership in the Justice Society. And the AMA probably pulled his medical license... ...serves him right, too....

Doctor Fate and the Spectre are gone forever; the names and some of the attributes of each could be revived in modern code-approved comic books, but the spirit and the essential qualities would not be present. Any version which could be approved by the Comics Code would have to be so emasculated that only the name would link the modern version with those flamboyant, overblown, often ridiculous and yet, somehow, magnificent creations of two decades ago.

Doctor Fate and the Spectre were, of course, too super to last, even in an age of flamboyant comic book superheroes. But the first few stories about these characters have a spirit, a driving force and an imagination that is mind-shaking. Nowhere in science fiction, even in the cosmic settings of Doc Smith's Lensmen stories, or in the stories of Captain Future, do you find such lavish backdrops for the action. Even fantasy can't match them, for fantasy generally is held down, limited in its flights of imagination. This is a good and necessary thing; if anything is possible, there can be no doubts about the triumph of Good over Evil -- the author has an infinite number of rabbits ready to leap out of the hat.



But, just because we are used to reading fiction with rules, stories where not quite everything can happen, it is a new, startling and, for a time, fascinating thing to find stories in which there are no limits, where every card is wild and can be whatever the dealer says it is.

To the best of my knowledge, the only comic book characters who enjoyed this freedom from all rules, all logic, all restraint were Doctor Fate and the Spectre.

They could do anything they wanted, anything their creators could conceive.

They were the wild ones.

PISTOLARY INTERCOURSE

Don Thompson

(Room 27, 3518 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland 15, Ohio)

Xero 6 lacks only a Castillo item. (Incidentally, bwah, in 5 you say that MZBradley and I wrote letters anent Castillo that were "violence-oriented." You must mean some other Don Thompson, because I never mentioned Castillo. I figured that anyone who adopted G. Legman (see "And We Quote" in CA 41) as a mentor is more to be pitied than censored. Gershon Legman is sick, sick, sick. A more sex-obsessed person I have never encountered: he censors a certain Hollywood director's name as Alfred Hitchc--k...and no, it's not satire. I can well believe Budrys when he speaks of him as running blushing from hot dog stands. Pick up a copy of "Love and Death, a Study in Censorship" at your friendly neighborhood library and find out what it's like to paddle about in a diseased mind. He has quite a bit on comic books and the line I quoted in CA 41 is NOT out of context. But Castillo is free to choose him as a mentor if he wishes. I got a large charge out of him ((Castillo)) myself.)

The cover (to undigress) is, like Willis, brilliant. Pat's editorial was fine and very informal and chatty. Willis is Willis (higher praise only can be given the next item). Davidson is Davidson (the ultimate accolade).

Harris on Bester was well done, but I gave up on Bester some time ago. His stories were good, but his essays and "book reviews" in F&SF are pretty pathetic. Coulson's fanzine re-

continued on page 4

views are very good, and didn't you mess up the heading on that, though. Color work good mostly, though. Ebert's parody of "My Last Duchess" is quite well done and one poem per issue goes down rather nicely.

"The Fantastic Paperback" is dull but interesting. Paradox? I mean, like, since I'm interested in fantasy paperbacks, I was interested in the article. Were I not, I couldn't have stomached it. I can read and enjoy well written articles on subjects I have no interest in (such as Boggs on cowboy magazines), but this wouldn't have been one of them. Tucker on Bloch was superb. Now get Bloch on Tucker (not possible at present, I realize) and you shall really have something. Too bad Tucker didn't get picked as Chicon Guest of Honor (though I dig Sturgeon). Mebbeso we could pressure DC in 63?

Carter on Verne only mildly interesting. Your comics article was quite good, but I was disappointed to learn that the only 7 Soldiers story I read was not an exception. They were all bad, huh? [Most were worse.] Ellington did a nice job on Planet -- this is the first article you've run that was more unfavorable than favorable to comics, by the way. Both titles were good, though mystifying until the article was read.

avram davidson

(410 West 110th Street, New York 25, New York)

Oh what merry fun and games! Somebody mentions fillum Dead of Night, describes episodes. I, Avram, say that one episode was not like so, but like so, and that it was by Oscar Fingall O'Flaherty Wilde -- my error: O.F. O'F. Wills Wilde. Larry Harris "corrects" me, says it was by George Hopley (Cornell Woolrich). Tony Boucher says that it was not either, it was so by O.F.O'F.W. Wilde. Ken Beale says it, yes, it was based on Wildo's Lord Arthur Savile's Crime, but it wasn't in Dead of Night, it was in Flesh and Fantasy. He says the script was by Berre Lyndon and Jonathen Latimer, and that one of the episodes was about an ugly girl who masqued at Mardi Gras and "falls in love.../and/ At the end her features have magically altered and she goes on to Live Happily...etc."

Wellsir [Here Col. Davidson rubs his hands and hums happily] Beale, this story you describe is obviously based on (or hooked from) one by Sir Max Beerbohm, in which the masquer or masquee was not a girl, ugly, but a man, depraved. He buys an angelic mask, falls in love, has his mask ripp't untimely off by a rival -- lo! -- the once evile face is now that of an angel! Back me up, Tony? Am I right, Ken?

If you (KB) are right, I seem to have mixed two episodes from two films, both starring Edward (not Edgar; sheest, how picayune can you get?) G. Robinson, the one in Flesh and Fantasy, and the one you say was in The Night Has a Thousand Eyes. My next question, gentles, is, How Do They Differ? Let's get it straight if we can.

LIN CARTER'S FANTASTIC BUNNY RABBIT
BY GOOD OL' STEVE STILES
A RABBIT! FANTASTIC.
HEY, LIN, IS THIS BRIGHT EYED MAMMAL HOUSE BROKEN?
...WELL --AHEM--
GOT SOME KIND OF SIGNAL EH, CARTER?
SIGH!
END

Altho we're having lots of fun as it is, no? Even at the risk of being called a hypothetical idiot. I think KB mistakes the function of Xero's as that of a Serious Historical Journal. Surely, Lupoff, you will scarcely regard the magazine, yourself, as more than a semi-conducted tour along the banks of misty Nostalgia? Surely half the fun lies in observing what sticks in the memory, what doesn't, what curious transmogrifications occur when dipt in moonlight, etc. I recommend to all who agree -- and all who don't -- a book called IN SEARCH OF XANADU, available in hard covers and soft, which tracks down the elements in Coleridge's reading which, buried in the rich ferment of his mid a while, came forth transmuted into the pure gold of ANCIENT MARINER and KUBLAI KHAN. It was by somebody named Lowry, or maybe it was Lowndes, but not Bob Lowndes, although rather like it, and appeared in 1929 -- or was it 1931?

I am sorry if Master Beale finds this "moronic babble...very painful to read..." but I think that most of us are able to refrain from taking ourselves so damned seriously that we can't have fun.

On re-reading everything over again, is it possible that there was only one film with Egbert G. Robinson -- no, no. Well, it's all very curious. I'm as confused as anone. Isn't it delightful?

Before closing I wish to observe that I am Intrigued by Bhob Stewart's portrait (?) of me. I look rather like a flatulent Hobbit. Chances of getting the Original? Bhob? Dhick? Anyone? /The original is here, but it's on a torn sheet of old programming paper or some such. Maybe Bhob would re-do it, Suitable for Framing? Otherwise, you are of course welcome to the original original./

BOB SHAW

(150 Bennett Avenue, New York 40, New York)

I know from having read The Harp Stateside that Walter Willis has once before gone through the harrowing experience of having to live up to enthusiastic advance notices, but after seeing the cover of Xero 6 I wonder what he will do. I mean, I've never seen him, but what if he doesn't look like a cross between Flash Gordon and Ellsworth M. Toohey? Will he now feel that we expect him to?

Your typo in the first line of "Reader Beware!" making the name of the villain "Lick Lupoff" instead of "Lick Dupoff" as the author obviously intended is yet another coal heaped on the head of much-put-upon Avram Davidson. Indeed Lick Dupoff is EVIL.

Larry Harris puts down Alfred Bester for attributing the chief charm of s-f to "Personality." He rightly demands to know "what the hell is this Personality?" But he winds up proposing as the true essential ingredient an idea. "No book is ever built around anything but an idea." I, rightly I think, would like to know "what the hell is an idea?" If the idea is what makes or breaks a story, why isn't every Utopia-in-reverse as good as 1984? For that matter, what makes 1984 so good? It's a pretty damned simple, obvious idea, and I doubt that many currently practicing sf writers could make much of a story out of it. What is the "idea" of a Shakespeare play, or of the Iliad, or of Paradise Lost, to take a few random specimens from Western literature. The theme of Paradise Lost is the Puritan concept of the creation and fall of man, but I have always felt that the epic survived in spite of its theme, as a reading of innumerable dreary Puritan tracts of the period on the same subject should convince anyone. Larry does a good job knocking down Bester's fancies, but spoils it by postulating a "secret ingredient" of his own. The "no book is ever built around anything but..." theory is a snare and a delusion. Good writing is marked by a multiplicity of excellences, not by one secret ingredient.

walt willis

(170 Upper N'Ards Road, Belfast 4, Northern Ireland)

I won't say I'm surprised Xero 6 has gone so well [a sellout -- 118 copies @ $1 or 7/ apiece] because that would be unfair to a fine magazine, but I'm delighted for both you and me. And hell yes, I am surprised, because nobody who hasn't got it already can know what a good issue it is. I think Tucker's article alone is a classic, the best thing he's done in years. I liked the editorial too and Avram Davidson is a perpetual joy. Rest of the material was interesting in a less spectacular way. The comics material is rather lost on me because they didn't have them when I was a kid, but I know similar material about the Magnet and the Gem and the Nelson Lee would be just as interesting and nostalgic to me as this stuff evidently is to you people. In fact there is, I believe, a fandom around these old boys papers.

By the way, in case I've seemed unappreciative about the cover, after your sending me a proof and everything, well it's just that it's not terribly like me and I can't really say it is, which is I suppose what you've been expecting me to say. If I did you would know I was a liar when you met me. Not that it matters, of course, and it's still a very fine piece of work. ...Yes, sure, it's OK for Fitch to reprint "The Slant Story" as far as I'm concerned.

Don Fitch

(3908 Frijo, Covina, California)

Thanks again to both you and WAW for permission to reprint "The Slant Story;" as things stand, I intend to do it in two parts in the next two letterpress issues of ½, about 150 copies of which will go to the regular mailist, (fans), and 400 to members of NAPA. Considering the speed (or lack thereof) with which I set type, and the fact that it's more fun to pick up a 6-pack and go over to Burbee's after work, the first issue isn't likely to come out until February or March, and the second not until July -- appearance here, therefore, shouldn't interfere with the sales of Xero. [No more sales to interfere with...Xero 6 was our sole money-raising issue. The present 35¢/3-for-$1 was instituted in an attempt to cut circulation. A dismal failure. Think we should raise it even higher?] As long as the type is set up, I might as well run off 50 or so copies on antique laid paper of just the Willis item, add a few reprints from SLANT, and bind the whole as a book for distribution by the Shaws for the benefit of the Willis Fund. This is one way of gaining fannish immortality, not to mention a sore left arm -- there will probably be a good many pages, and the lever will have to be pulled for each one. And then each letter and space will have to be distributed back into the case and..... Why do I get ideas like this, anyhow?

[That <u>will</u> be a book! Put us down for a copy. In fact, considering what has happened to the demand for past Willisiana, especially THIS, put us down for several.]

guy terwilliger

(Route 4, Boise, Idaho)

Xero is hitting a nice stride -- from the early comic centered zine it has grown into a massive tome of interesting material. The much appreciated articles on the comics, the wonderful cartoons, the serious-without-being-sercon articles right down to the fannish type writing all blend together to make the best fanzine in fandom. [Bluuusshhh!]

Willis gets off to a good start on "The Slant Story." I'll have to take a stand here and defend why I can say I don't like faan fiction and then turn right around and praise some of it. Here is faan fiction with a purpose. From the melee of silly situations the reader can gain a story of what really happened, and an inside look at one of the out-

standing persons in fandom. The story doesn't give the reader the feeling that this is silly for the purpose of being silly. [But the Slant Story isn't faan fiction -- it isn't fiction at all. "Bedtime Story" is faan fiction. How do you feel about it?]

Harris completely missed the boat with me. Perhaps what he had to say about what Bester wrote is valid. Frankly, I couldn't follow his line of thought, becoming bogged down trying to keep the idea straight. I'm still not sure of anything other than Harris didn't agree with what Bester said. He did, however, arouse my curiosity enough that I will try to get the book so I can read what Bester said. From the Harris telling, I'm not sure whether Bester said that the author must put his own personality into the story, or whether he said that the story must have personality...

From my own point of view, I have read many authors who do put their own personality into what they write. I enjoy what they write, but as for their personality, I think it stinks. I don't see the importance of author's personality at all. [I would think that if an author's personality bothers you to that degree, that it would interfere to a great degree with the amount of pleasure that you get from his book.]

Collins' "The Fantastic Paperback" makes me wist all the more that I had the courage to go ahead and open a paperback bookshop here in Boise. The idea is fascinating to me ever since I went into one in San Francisco this summer. I have to be rational, though, and remember that Boise doesn't seem able to support even a magazine-tobacco shop combination. Yet it would be nice to see some of these books that Collins mentions without having to order them sight unseen. Rather than our newsstands increasing in size, they are dwindling into nothing. What few there are carry so few zines that you might as well stay at home. In fairness, though, they do carry the sf zines.

Pong's satire on the master makes me wistful for the days when the "great one" had more time for our goings on. Perhaps someday he will tire of the mad pace and drift back.

I always wondered what it was about Planet Comics that I didn't like. Ellington may have told me. Both parts of the series were of interest. I wonder if I would have these same feelings if I got ahold of the old comics and re-read some now. I used to like Leading Comics, but you make it sound so grim at this time. I do know that the current revivals of many of my old heroes leave me cold.

Ethel Lindsay

(Courage House 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, England)

I was mightily pleased with my Xero, and thought it a very handsome production. Particularly the cover, very posh!

It is nice to see you in the editorial chair, Pat, and I hope you manage to find a mansion to suit you. I have lately bought a (second-hand) filing cabinet, and have found this invaluable. At last all my zines are filed in proper order, the correspondence all together, the various bits and pieces really in a sensible manner. Will Scot and Haver material in their own compartments I can at last put my hand on anything I want without trouble. Only sad thing is that with the sorting out process I was able to be absolutely sure that my HARP STATESIDE had vanished. [Aha! That's Supply and Demand in action!] As I cannot recall ever lending it, and the circle of people I would lend it to is small and easily enquired among I have to resign myself to the thought that it is gone for good. However, things like your Slant Story help to make up for the loss. I am reading this avidly! It is of course, as goes without saying (almost), superbly written.

Avram Davidson is a hoot, how I laughed at that poem, and admired its cleverness. I have been highly praising Larry Harris's review of Sturgeon's writing in the earlier issues, and indeed have lent it out to a few SFCoL members who agreed how well it was done. I enjoyed his scalpelling of Bester and look forward to the reply. Bob Coulson is my favorite

zine reviewer. I do not always agree with his evaluations but can always gauge what my own reactions will be by his, which is, I think, the mark of a good critic.

I go for this type of poem style by Ebert: probably because I prefer a clever or witty poem to an emotion-laden one.

As there is as much sf discussion in this XERO as comic book analysis I do not think folks can any longer label your zine; it is as well-rounded as it is possible to be.

Among the many good letters the one that interested me most was that of Algis Budrys' continuing as it did the discussion of Sturgeon and his writing. I was very taken with the point he made and the theory he raised, perhaps because I would so much prefer it to the the thought that Sturgeon is lazy! As I have just finished reading SOME OF YOUR BLOOD I too feel that with this book he has produced a truly individual story. I wonder if it is possible to lure Sturgeon himself into this discussion? I would dearly like to know what he thought of the Harris article. Well, apart from whether they were right or wrong, they were extremely valuable for the listing of Sturgeon writings alone. [He did not comment.]

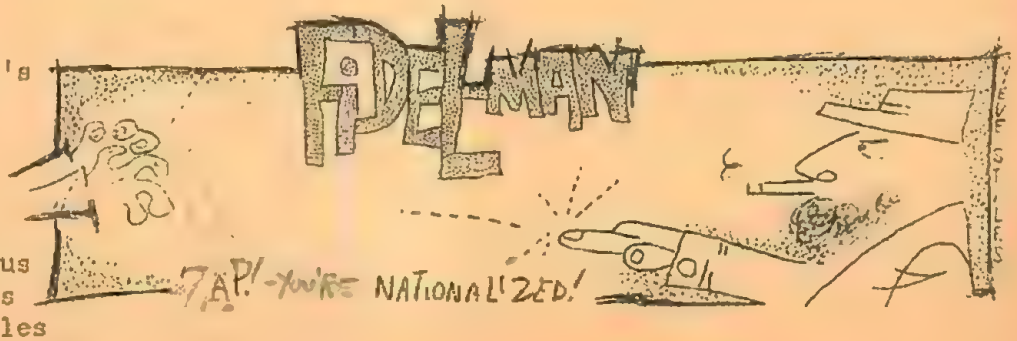
BOB BRINEY

(Dept of Mathematics, 2-174, M.I.T., Cambridge 39, Massachusetts)

Charles Collins' comments on fantasy in paper-back were interesting, though I disagree with a good many of his value judgements, especially in regard to pb cover design. For example, I don't think the smear of purple and red on the cover of SOME OF YOUR BLOOD has any merit either artistically or as a selling point. For my money, the best pb covers I've seen were on some Bantam and Pennant westerns back in the mid-50's. Some of William Teason's recent covers for Dell mysteries are also very fine.

In some respects the current pb boom represents too much of a good thing. It has even reached the point where pb publishers are issuing not only reprints of harcover books (as well as original pb's), but reprints of other pb titles. Gold Medal recently issued John D. MacDonald's AREA OF SUSPICION and Fred Brown's MADBALL, both of which were Dell First Editions some years ago; and Bantam has reprinted some Ace westerns. Also, pb publishers are having a field day with the old titles which are no longer covered by copyright -- there are at least four different pb editions of Conan Doyle's HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES currently on the stands, and the new Dell edition of KING SOLOMON'S MINES is at least the third pb printing of that title now available.

Some recent pb titles not mentioned by Collins are of particular interest -- Clifton Fadiman's anthology FANTASIA MATHEMATICA (Simon & Schuster), Hermann Hesse's MAGISTER LUDI (Atlantic Paperbacks), and Frazer-Gaster's THE NEW GOLDEN BOUGH (Doubleday Anchor Books), for example. The latter is one of the biggest pb bargains I've seen: about 450 pages, size 8"x10", of small print. It is an updated and annotated abridgement of Frazer's original GOLDEN BOUGH.



....Got a kick out of "Marginman" on the back cover. There is, of course, a far more vicious fiend--"Stapleman." He's the one who loosens staples in fmz while they are in transit, so that you end up with only the last page of the zine!

James Blish

(P.O. Box 278, Milford, Pike County, Pennsylvania)

Now, Richard Kyle, Maybe this Amis discussion is wearing out and you (Lupoffs) should call it closed, the way British magazines do when the editors detect the participants starting a second round without having been aware of the first; that certainly happened, and repeatedly, with the STARSHIP TROOPER hassel, and is certain to happen over TSIAS LAND. If you need a place to start cutting, I suggest here... /What, just when it's about to get interesting?/

Excellency in an index is a judgement of whether or not it covers the material in the boook, not of whether the material itself is adequate. Kyle is not the first person to scream because Amis' index doesn't list certain names often enough to satisfy him, but this is not what an index is for. (A minor point, evoked by puzzlement over Kyle's oddly punctuated phrase, "the 'excellent' index James Blish speaks of".)

On matters of more substance, I find I can agree with Kyle on only one point, that being that some important writers were neglected by Amis. My letter which follows his in your Willish says as much. This was almost inevitable and doesn't greatly disturb me; were I to write such a book, the authors I would emphasize and/or ignore would comprise a sharply different list and perhaps it wouldn't satisfy Mr. Kyle any better. It would not, for instance, pay any more attention to Olaf Stapledon than Mr. Kyle finds in Amis; I consider Stapledon a bow-legged philosopher and arthritic writer of no interest or importance whatsoever; whereas I might have gone on at some length about M. P. Shiel, whose style Sprague de Camp finds as impossible as I find Stapledon's (or Merritt's). What ought to be borne in mind here is that Amis has almost wholly thrown aside the standard genealogy of science-fiction and concerned himself with the phenomenon as primarily an American one with its focus in the history of the magazines; hence the only book authors of any previous era he finds it necessary to mention are those who appeared in the earliest magazines and hence formed other writers' impressions of what was wanted -- these being, of course, Wells and Verne, not Shiel or Stapledon or Robert Hugh Benson, who are a hell of a lot less important than even so minor a writer as A. Hyatt Verril in the formation of modern science fiction. If you cling to the standard family tree, going all the way back to Lucian of Samasata and all that crap, then of course Amis' approach is going to seem unfair and scrappy; but I think it is quite defensible. Is there any influential s-f writer who has ever read any of these antiquities? If not, then why bother to name them? Can any writer in the audience name a science-fiction novel by Voltaire, or show a single example of its having influenced 20th-century s-f in any way? I doubt it, and obviously, so does Amis.

I think this may explain why Kyle, and some others, call the Amis book badly researched, etc.; they are looking for data excluded by Amis' scheme (which is coherent and logical, whether you like it or not; no man is required to document a point he doesn't think worth making). I would like to see some of these critics of the Amis come up with a list of errors. I could find very few, and these small, as I indicated in my review. If Mr. Kyle has had better luck, let's see the specifications.

Next we have criticism ad hominem, which in this instance asserts that those who praise Amis' book are simply licking his eminent boots. (I leave out the part of the argument which says that those who damn the book are also licking his boots, as being a little too subtle for the likes of me.) I reject this as a personal inconvenience because it would force me to assume

that the kind things Mr. Kyle has said about me were also designed to be boot-licking, whereas I prefer to believe that he meant them. But there's no real need to be that personal about it, for long experience with ad hominem criticism has shown that it never gets the critic into any real understanding of the work; he is too busy reviewing the author and the readers. What profit has Mr. Kyle got out of it? Well, the customary ones: First, "The literary reputation science fiction deserves -- in the measure it deserves -- will be determined by time and truth, not by any man, no matter what his name;" this is what Mr. Amis calls a "piety", which is something less than a truism. Second, a demand that s-f take "a good, direct look at itself and its history" and show "proper respect for the man who made it"; this is of course the antithesis of the piety; the head that could contain them both without finding them at war with eachother has my admiration, but not my envy.

I for one refuse to be scolded for lack of piety toward any figure, any more than I accept scolding for too much piety toward Amis. This applies mostly to Kyle's remarks about JWCjr, though it might equally well apply to his estimate of Stapledon or Wells. Like Mr. Kyle, I was reading sf in the early 30's and constantly thereafter, and I know what Campbell accomplished; I was one of the beneficiaries, as I have often said in public and in print. I am also one of the beneficiaries, as is Mr. Kyle, of Hugo Gernsback. But I am not going to don horse blinders and assert that Mr. Gernsback's recent utterances deserve any serious attention; and were Mr. Amis to say that JWCjr lately has become a crank (he does not so say, though Mr. Kyle marks the word "crank" as though he were quoting somebody), no considerations of reverence or gratitude would prevent me from agreeing, though both gratitude and reverence exist.

I remember what John Campbell did, and honor him for it, but Mr. Kyle hasn't said what it was. He says John "created the modern magazine science fiction story." This is a fractic of a fact. John created some modern magazine sf stories, and fostered many others; but he had lots of help. Horace Gold created, in part, another kind of modern sf story; but again, he made perhaps 85% of the noise and did about 3.5% of the work. This is the natural relationship between those who edit and those who write, as you may see by consulting any anthology in any field of writing whatsoever. What constitutes "proper respect" can't be judged except operationally, by what one finds one can respect each time the subject comes up; there is no operational definition of "proper". It was proper of writers to respect their editors at the time that their editors were useful to them, perhaps; and maybe it is not proper for a writer to show respect to the editors who are now actively pushing notions that prevent the writers from writing, even though the same sets of writers and editors (so far as the names are concerned) seem to be involved. If this is a sensible way of looking at the matter, then I can't see that reverence has much to do with it. And mind you, I am talking exclusively about what is called the "creative" editor, who sometimes does actively help and influence a writer or a whole field; those who are simply parasites on writers are always in the large majority, and collect even larger slices of the check; and the one may quickly turn into the other -- and invariably does.

So one's opinion of /his-anyone's/ current editorial work is far from irrelevant. It is the only way one can form a current opinion. The rest is reverence, which I leave to bystanders.

Finally (honest!) I have what I suspect may be an ad hominem argument of my own, or at least an anti-populist heresy, which is: It is silly to wax angry or pious over a hobby, as Mr. Kyle and Mr. Beale do. Does Mr. Kyle write stf? Or Mr. Beale motion pictures? If not, of what use is all this self-righteous passion? The practitioner has to be conditionally involved or he can't practice, no matter how minor the art (such as Mr. Kyle's "Westerns as an art-form"); but the fan of teensy-weensy crafts like sf or cigar-band collecting should be saner than practitioners, at least to the extent that he can avoid turning into a cloud of live steam over matters of no moment.

No, Mr. Kyle, sf is not Melville, and John Campbell is not the Albert Schweitzer of our field. We have no such, nor are we ever likely to get them.

PETER SCHUG

(42-37 Hampton Street, Elmhurst 73, Long Island, New York)
As fanzines go, Xero 6 was worth a buck much more than most at worth a quarter. If you get a chance, thank Colonel Davidson for noticing my poem, and please let him know it HAS SO got a rhyme. Just in case you have lost or are unable to decipher my original (or in case I goofed), the version you published in Xero 5 had a line missing, and the complete poem belongs to go like this:

In the shallow sleazy sunlight
sits a snarkle sipping soy sauce
stands a psycho on a cycle
on a dais in Vendemore
stares a madman screaming mimis
screams a mimi yelling maybes
snark will bite her give her rabies
stands a snarkle smiling psycho
Captain Snarkles singing psycle

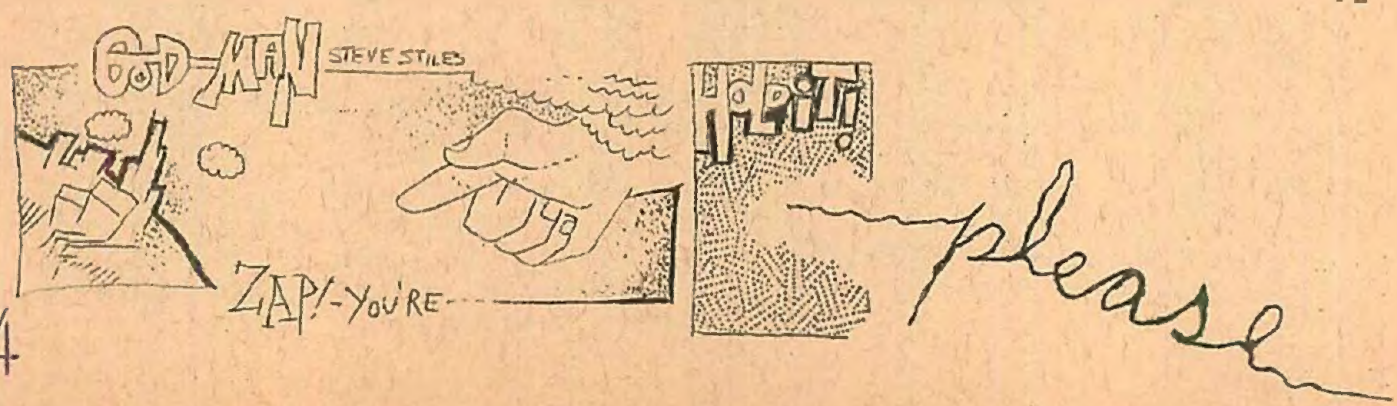
The word "bite" in the third-from-last line might well be changed to "bight" in honor of "Ne to your Leader Take." You will please note that the rhythm is vastly improved when all the lines are included, and the one rhyme sort of joggles the rhythm at just the right interval to keep it from getting boring.

I enjoyed the Willis article both for style and content (since I am as you say a "duper bug"). I also enjoyed Ne to your Leader Take since most of my money in those days went for Captain Marvel, Superman, and Popular Science. And also mainly because I forgot all about tying up girls which seems to have gone out of style.

* * * * * *

+++And so we come to the close of another letter column. As usual, a number of excellent missives must be left out if we're to keep this down to any reasonable length. Also as usual there is no WAHF; those F whom WAH have our thanks, sincere type, and there is just room for this excerpt from Richard Kyle: "Ken Beale's letter reminded me of all the arguments I used to hear at fan club meetings. There was usually a guy like Beale who really dug science fiction, instead of movies, and then there was this other who thought AMAZING STORIES (this is in Palmer's day) was great. 'Beale' would just be putting over his strongest clincher on how science fiction was literature and art when the other guy would say 'Yeah, and did you read that Don Wilcox story in the latest AMAZING? "The Eagle Man"? This guy the hero's got wings, see, but he can't fly because....' "

FL



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